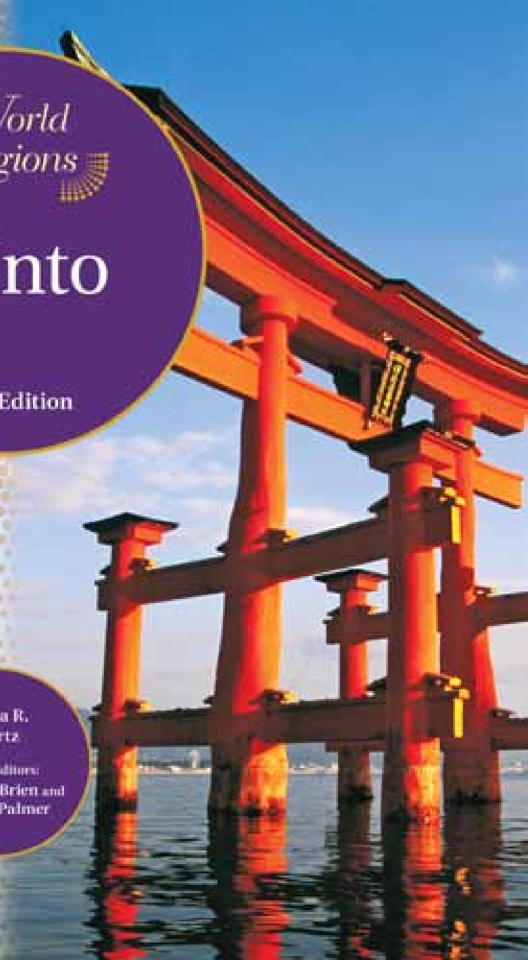
World Religions

Shinto

Third Edition



Paula R. Hartz

Series Editors:
Joanne O'Brien and
Martin Palmer

WORLD RELIGIONS

SHINTO

THIRD EDITION

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PREFACE

Almost from the start of civilization, more than 10,000 years ago, religion has shaped human history. Today more than half the world's population practice a major religion or indigenous spiritual tradition. In many 21st-century societies, including the United States, religion still shapes people's lives and plays a key role in politics and culture. And in societies throughout the world increasing ethnic and cultural diversity has led to a variety of religions being practiced side by side. This makes it vital that we understand as much as we can about the world's religions.

The World Religions series, of which this book is a part, sets out to achieve this aim. It is written and designed to appeal to both students and general readers. The books offer clear, accessible overviews of the major religious traditions and institutions of our time. Each volume in the series describes where a particular religion is practiced, its origins and history, its central beliefs and important rituals, and its contributions to world civilization. Carefully chosen photographs complement the text, and sidebars, a map, fact file, glossary, bibliography, and index are included to help readers gain a more complete understanding of the subject at hand.

These books will help clarify what religion is all about and reveal both the similarities and differences in the great spiritual traditions practiced around the world today.




Hokkaido
Sea of Japan
Sado
Oki
KYOTO
TOKYO
Tsu
Honshu
(Oyamato)
MT FUJI
Iki
Awaji
Shikoku
Kyushu
Okinawa
Pacific Ocean
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: SHINTO AND JAPANESE LIFE



Shinto is Japan's native religion. It developed in prehistoric times on the Japanese islands, and it is deeply etched in the minds and hearts of the Japanese people. Because of its close association with the land's geography and history, Shinto is very nearly synonymous with the Japanese character. It has both shaped and been shaped by all of Japanese culture.

Traditionally followers of Asian religions are inclusive and tolerant of other faiths; thus people may practice more than one religious tradition at the same time. They see no inconsistency in being both Shinto and something else—usually Buddhist. Of the 128 million Japanese, according to the statistics of the Agency for Cultural Affairs for 2006, 107 million identify themselves as Shinto and 89 million identify themselves as Buddhist. In effect, then, every Japanese person is religious and the vast majority may be considered in some fashion to be followers of Shintoism. Of the others, many belong to the "New Religions," or the religious movements that have emerged since the 19th century, and

Shinto priests performing a purification ceremony at an international inter-faith environmental celebration in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund and Alliance of Religions and Conservation. The celebration in Kathmandu, Nepal, highlighted environmental projects carried out in partnerships with government and environment agencies.



the remainder include Christians (3 million), Muslims (120,000), and Jews (2,000).

Shinto has been closely associated with Buddhism for centuries, even sharing its temples and rituals. The Japanese have a saying, "Born Shinto, die Buddhist," which indicates their dual reliance on these two traditions at different points in their lives.

WHAT IS SHINTO?

Shinto is the Chinese name for the Japanese phrase *kami no michi,* which means "the way of the *kami*"—the *kami* are spirits or deities whose presence is felt everywhere. Shinto had no formal name at all until Buddhism, "the way of Buddha," came to Japan in the sixth century C.E. and people found it necessary to make some distinction. Before that the Japanese people had simply followed rituals and beliefs that had, it seemed, always been a part of their world—those many rituals and beliefs that had served them well.

GODS AND SPIRITS

In contrast to many other world religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, most of which focus their belief on a single, transcendent god, Shinto is polytheistic—that is, it has many deities. The title *god* suggests a division between the human and the divine that followers of Shinto do not make. While some Shinto deities, such as the sun goddess Amaterasu, are referred to as gods, most of the deities of Shinto are simple spirits that inhabit the world along with humans. The Shinto world is a continuous stream of creation, from the deities on the high plains of heaven to the trees, rocks, and dust of earth and everything below. All things may have spirits and may speak in their own voices. Humans are not specially created but are simply a part of the world like everything else.

Kami, spirits, are everywhere, and almost anything in creation may be

Origin of Name

The name *Shinto* is made up of two Chinese words, *shin* (神), meaning "divine," and *dao* (道), meaning "way." It is a translation of the Japanese phrase *kami no michi,* or "the way of the *kami*."

kami. Natural phenomena—rocks, trees, mountains, streams, waterfalls, animals, thunder—may be *kami,* especially if they are unusual or outstanding in some way. Not every natural object is *kami,* but in the Shinto world respect for natural creation is encouraged because even the most humble object may turn out to be invested with spirit.

Meaning of *Kami*

To understand the Shinto religion it is important to understand the concept of *kami*. *Kami,* which is both singular and plural, literally means "high" or "superior." It is sometimes translated as "god" or "deity" but more often as "spirit."

Shinto has no known founder and no central figure like Muhammad, Buddha, or Jesus. In some respects it is similar to Daoism or Native American religions, which also trace their origins to prehistory and also venerate many spirit beings. Shinto does not, however, include the concept of a vast overarching power, such as the Dao of Daoism or the Great Spirit of Native Americans.

PRAYERS AND PURIFICATION

Another way in which Shinto differs from most world religions is that it has no fixed scripture or holy book such as the Bible, Torah, Guru Granth Sahib, or the Quran. It does have ancient prayers, *norito* or *norii,* that were handed down orally for many centuries before being recorded in writing. One of the beliefs of Shinto is that special words, properly and beautifully spoken, can bring about good results. These prayers are recited to the *kami* at Shinto shrines by priests during key rituals and annual festivals, or *matsuri*.

Although there is no fixed dogma, or body of belief, to which a Shinto follower must adhere, Shinto does provide its followers with a code of values and a way of thinking that is deeply ingrained in Japanese life. Cleanliness and purification are emphasized. The grounds on which Shinto shrines are placed always include running water, often a spring or a stream, and as a sign of respect, worshippers bathe their hands and cleanse their mouths before approaching a shrine. The Shinto ideal is to lead a pure and sincere life that is pleasing to the many *kami*.

SHINTO AND THE LAND OF JAPAN

The country of Japan itself is an important element in the religion. While people do not worship their native land, they learn from childhood to love and respect it. Japan is a country of great natural beauty and variety, from snow-capped volcanoes and high mountains to ocean shores and peaceful inlets. Its trees and rocks, streams and waterfalls, along with its living creatures, are all seen as having a spiritual nature.

Shinto practice began among clans in small farming and fishing villages; thus the religion is deeply rooted in the land itself. As a result Shinto has never spread far from Japanese shores, and Japan's emperors have always been regarded as the keepers of the faith. Shinto's followers outside Japan are mainly Japanese-born people who continue to follow the religious customs of their native land. Unlike Christianity or Islam, which practice organized outreach, mainstream Shinto has never sent out missionaries to spread the faith, nor has it attempted to convert nonbelievers, although some modern-day Shinto sects welcome converts.

As a rule people do not join Shinto in any formal way. They are born to it and grow up in it, learning to identify themselves as followers of Shinto in much the same way that they identify with their family, their town, their island, or their country. Throughout their lives, whether they consider themselves religious or not, followers observe Shinto festivals and follow Shinto practices.

THE TORII

A symbol of Shinto, the torii, is the open gateway that stands at the entrance to every Shinto shrine. *Torii* literally means "bird-dwelling"; its crossbeams resemble bird wings reaching to the skies. The torii symbolically leads worshippers to the heavenly *kami* and is physically a doorway to the shrine.



A wooden torii at the entrance to the Meiji Shrine, Tokyo.

THE VARIETIES OF SHINTO

Throughout Japanese history Shinto has readily adapted itself to conditions and to the needs of its followers. When Chinese religions came to Japanese shores, around

200 C.E., Shinto incorporated aspects of Daoism and Confucianism. From the sixth century to the mid-19th century Shinto was so closely allied with Buddhism that it almost disappeared. It has always reasserted itself, however, and adapted to circumstance and changed with new influences and with time. It continues to do so today.

STATE SHINTO

After centuries of being overshadowed by Buddhism, Shinto rebounded as a separate entity in the late 1800s under Emperor Meiji. He encouraged Shinto worship and used government money to support Shinto shrines and priests. The form of Shinto that developed under Meiji's reform was known as State Shinto. It stressed patriotism and obedience to the emperor as the descendant and representative of the gods. State Shinto lasted until the end of World War II in 1945, when it was abolished by the government, and then under occupation by the Allied powers after Japan's surrender.

SECT SHINTO

While State Shinto was emerging under Emperor Meiji in the 1800s, a religious renaissance was taking place, mostly among the peasants and farmers. These people began to follow charismatic leaders who drew their teachings from Shinto, Buddhism, folk religion, and other traditions. These leaders, called living *kami*, and their so-called New Religions established large followings. Although the New Religions differed in many ways from traditional Shinto, their similarities allowed them to be known as Sect Shinto. Of the 13 recognized Shinto sects, the largest and best known is Tenrikyo, which is still attracting followers today.

IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD SHINTO

In the Shinto religion Japan's emperor has long been revered as the keeper of the faith. The imperial palace grounds contain three special shrines at which the emperor himself worships. The imperial family also maintains a special relationship with the shrines of the sun goddess at Ise, Japan, the holiest of Shinto shrines. At festival times the emperor sends special offerings to that shrine, often with a member of the imperial family as his representative. Traditionally a senior family member serves as high priest there, and important announcements regarding the imperial family are made there as well. The tradition that links the emperor and the Shinto religion is called Imperial Household Shinto.

SHRINE SHINTO

Shrine Shinto arose after World War II ended in 1945, when Japan's new constitution guaranteed freedom of religion and barred the government from supporting Shinto as a state religion, and the agency that had administered shrine finances and other business was dissolved.

There were more than 80,000 shrines, the sacred structures where people went to worship the *kami,* spread across Japan, and with their country ravaged by war, people felt the need of faith. In order to keep their shrines going priests and other shrine leaders banded together in an organization called the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honcho), which still continues to oversee the festival calendar and the upkeep and day-to-day running of Shinto shrines.

FOLK SHINTO

Many people who practice Shinto do so without belonging to an organized shrine. At small, independent, local shrines, and at home, they follow the customs of their forebears, worshipping local *kami* of the home and of the farm. This form of religion is known as Folk Shinto. It preserves the traditions of Shinto as it was practiced centuries ago and from which come present-day beliefs and practices. Although people who follow folk beliefs may also be members of an organized Shinto shrine, the heart of their worship is personal.

Above all Shinto is family centered. Many people practice domestic Shinto, maintaining a home altar to the *kami* and following simple prayer rituals on a regular basis. During the festival year the *kami* of local shrines are placed in portable shrines and processed around the town to visit the areas under their guidance. This is often an occasion for considerable celebration among the community.



Torii gates leading to a shrine in Tokyo. In modern-day Japan the Association of Shinto Shrines oversees the upkeep of most shrines, the training of priests, and the calendar of religious festivals.

SHINTO IN JAPANESE LIFE

Shinto stresses purity and uprightness. As children mature they are taught to listen to the dictates of the heart; to respect their ancestors, their leaders, and the natural world; and to show gratitude to the *kami* for the many blessings they have received. This is the essence of Shinto.



Shinto festivals often include a parade in which young men carry *mikoshi,* or portable shrines, around the town precincts. The procession takes the local *kami,* who are believed to be inside the *mikoshi,* to all parts of the area under their guidance and care and allows the people to show reverence to their guardian *kami*. This *mikoshi* being pushed in the rain is part of the parade for the Gion *matsuri* (festival) held on July 17 in the ancient capital of Kyoto.

SHINTOISM IN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION

Originally a religion of rural places, Shinto has adapted along with its people to modern society. In some cases industries have taken on the role once held by small local communities, even constructing shrines on company property. City worshippers now petition *kami* once associated with fields and streams for good grades and success in their work. Many central city shrines will have a specific area set aside for the ritual blessing of, for example, new cars or trucks for a company. Shinto priests will also often perform groundbreaking ceremonies for new buildings such as high-rise office towers. The role of Shinto is purely ritualistic. It does not include any role in public education or advocacy.

NATURE AND THE HEAVENLY *KAMI*

In this most industrialized nation of Asia, Shinto continues to connect the people to their land by creating an appreciation of nature. The tourist industry thrives on taking Japanese travelers on day trips to Shinto shrines and to the natural wonders long associated with Japan's *kami*.

According to Japanese lore the beautiful islands of Japan, with their snow-capped mountains and sparkling shores, their waterfalls and lush vegetation, were created by heavenly *kami* who then peopled the islands with their descendants. Although few modern-day Japanese people accept Shinto beliefs literally, they continue to express respect and gratitude to the *kami* who are traditionally believed to have created their land and its people.

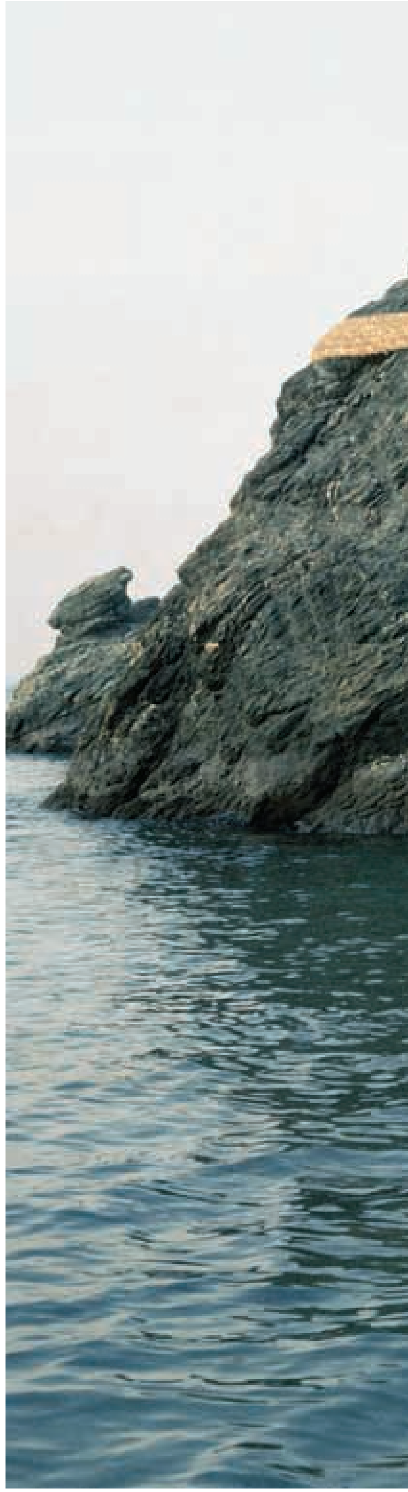
CHAPTER 2

THE MYTHIC ORIGINS OF SHINTO

Although Shinto does not have a sacred scripture like the Bible or the Quran, it does have two highly revered texts whose origins date back to the eighth century C.E. At that time Emperor Temmu was concerned that the already ancient stories of the celestial origins of the imperial line and the Japanese people were being forgotten and might be lost. Temmu ordered the ancient stories committed to memory. The job fell to one of his servants, Hiyeda no Are. She learned two by heart: "The Successions of Emperors" and "The Ancient Traditions of the Past Ages."

Temmu's successor, Empress Gemmyo, ordered that the oral histories be written down. The first volume, the *Kojiki,* or "Record of Ancient Matters," was begun under her reign, in 712 C.E., to trace the succession of emperors. The *Nihongi,* or *Nihon Shoki* ("Chronicles of Japan"), completed around 720, tells the story of the divine origins of Japan.

These two books contain the foundation of all Shinto beliefs and customs. Other books, detailing the actions of the many Shinto *kami* (deities), appeared later. The first 10 books of the



These "Wedded Rocks" at Futamigaura in Iso Bay, near the Grand Shrines at Ise, are believed to have sheltered the Creative Pair, Izanagi and Izanami, the legendary creators of Japan.



Engishiki, a compilation of Shinto ceremonies dated to 927, are devoted to the *kami* and their stories.

The versions of the Shinto tales in the different books vary slightly, in much the same way that a story may differ in each Gospel of the Bible. Yet the essential messages about good and evil, life and death, are the same.

Shinto's rich mythology tells the story of the heavenly and earthly *kami* and the creation of the Japanese islands and all creatures and beings on them. It also explains such natural phenomena as night and day and answers questions traditionally answered by religions, such as why there is death and suffering in the world. Significantly for the Japanese, it establishes the divine origin of the line of emperors, tracing their ancestry to the sun goddess Amaterasu O-Mikami herself.

THE CREATION OF JAPAN'S ISLANDS

According to Shinto belief the universe was not created but simply always existed. In its earliest stage it was an unformed, oily, reedy sea. Eventually the sea divided into three parts: the sky, or heaven; a middle level, still covered by sea, which would become the earth; and Yomi-tsu-kuni, the land of darkness.

As the universe divided, three invisible *kami* beings arose from the sea and found their way to the high plains of heaven, the broad expanses of sky above the earth. There they remained, giving birth to other invisible deities. After several generations of being born one by one, the heavenly *kami* were born in pairs, always a male and a female.

The fifth pair of *kami* to be born were Izanagi and Izanami, a heavenly brother and sister who had more or less human form. This pair had a special destiny. The other heavenly *kami* sent Izanagi and Izanami down from the heavens to bring order to the unformed world below. They became the creators of Japan.

Izanagi and Izanami descended by way of the Rainbow Bridge of Heaven to a point just above the waters of the sea. Standing on the Rainbow Bridge, Izanagi drew his sword and dipped it into the sea. As he pulled it out, the briny water that dripped from it

solidified and formed the island of Onokoro. Izanagi and Izanami stepped off the Rainbow Bridge onto the first island of Japan.

Izanagi and Izanami wed. Their fertile union produced the eight principal islands of Japan—Awaji, Shikoku, Oki, Kyushu, Iki, Tsu, Sado, and Oyamato. Izanami also gave birth to many major *kami*—the god of the sea, Ohowata-tsumi; the god of the wind, Shima-Tsu-Hiko; the god of the trees, Kuku-no-shi; the god of the mountains, Ohoyama-tsumi; and many others. Izanagi and Izanami were the parents of all of the geography of Japan—its mountains, trees, waterfalls, flowers, wind, and rain. At his birth Shima-Tsu-Hiko, the wind god, blew away the mists that covered the islands, and Izanagi and Izanami saw their handiwork for the first time.

THE DEATH OF IZANAMI

The couple's last-born child, Homu-subi, was the fire god, and Izanami died giving birth to him. Crazed with grief, Izanagi cut up the young god with his sword, and from each piece arose a new deity.

The grieving Izanagi followed his wife into Yomi-tsu-kuni, the land of darkness. Knowing that she was hideous in death, Izanami hid herself from Izanagi, calling to him from the darkness that she had already eaten the food of the underworld and could not return with him. Izanagi begged her to return with him, and Izanami agreed to petition the spirits of Yomi to make an exception for her. However, she made Izanagi promise to wait and not to try to see her.

Izanagi became impatient with waiting and tried to find Izanami. Instead of his beloved wife, he found her rotting body, guarded by the Eight Thunders and the Ugly Hags of the underworld. Furious that Izanagi had broken his promise to wait,



Japanese cherry blossom trees in bloom at the edge of a lake backed by snow-capped mountains. Shinto is deeply rooted in the land of Japan, which is believed to have been created by the heavenly *kami* who inhabit the natural features of the landscape and the elements of nature.

Izanami cried out that she had been betrayed and humiliated, and the guardians of the underworld jumped to the attack. Izanagi fled, barely eluding capture. He flung his stick at them, slowing them down enough that he could escape. Finally he reached the gateway back to earth and blocked it with a huge rock. Thus were the dead eternally separated from the living.

Izanami screamed after him that in revenge for his betrayal she would destroy 1,000 of the earth's inhabitants each day. Izanagi replied that he would create 1,500 new inhabitants each day, thereby peopling the islands. Life would always outpace death, and Japan would flourish.

THE BIRTH OF AMATERASU, THE SUN GODDESS

Feeling unclean after his encounter with death, Izanagi plunged into the river Woto to purify himself. From his discarded clothes sprang 12 new deities. As he bathed, more deities appeared. As Izanagi washed his nose he gave birth to the storm god, Susano-wo, to whom he gave the kingdom of the ocean. As he cleaned his right eye, out came Tsuki-yomi, the god of the moon. As he washed his left eye, he gave birth to supreme heavenly *kami* Amaterasu O-Mikami, the sun goddess.

The *Nihongi* tells another version of the creation story. In the *Nihongi* Izanagi and Izanami, having given birth to the islands of Japan, the rivers, the trees, and the mountains, bring about the birth of Amaterasu and place her in the sky to rule the lands. Izanami next gives birth to Tsuki-yomi, the moon goddess, and lastly to Susano-wo, the storm god. Many tales refer to Izanami as the mother of the heavenly trio, although others credit Izanagi with their creation.

Ruled by Amaterasu, the heavenly *kami* lived on the high plains of heaven, a vast area of sky through which ran a wide river that is recognized today as the Milky Way.

Land of the Rising Sun

Amaterasu O-Mikami means "The Great *Kami* Shining in Heaven." She was considered so lovely and glorious that Izanagi, one of the Creative Pair, placed her in the heavens as the sun goddess. Amaterasu is considered the highest of the heavenly *kami,* and in her honor Japan is called the Land of the Rising Sun.

The *kami* held council on the riverbanks and decided the fate of people below. Although Amaterasu herself never descended to earth, other gods and their messengers visited at will. A heavenly bridge connected the heavens and the earth, enabling the deities to go back and forth. One day it collapsed, forming the isthmus, or narrow strip of land, west of Kyoto, Japan.

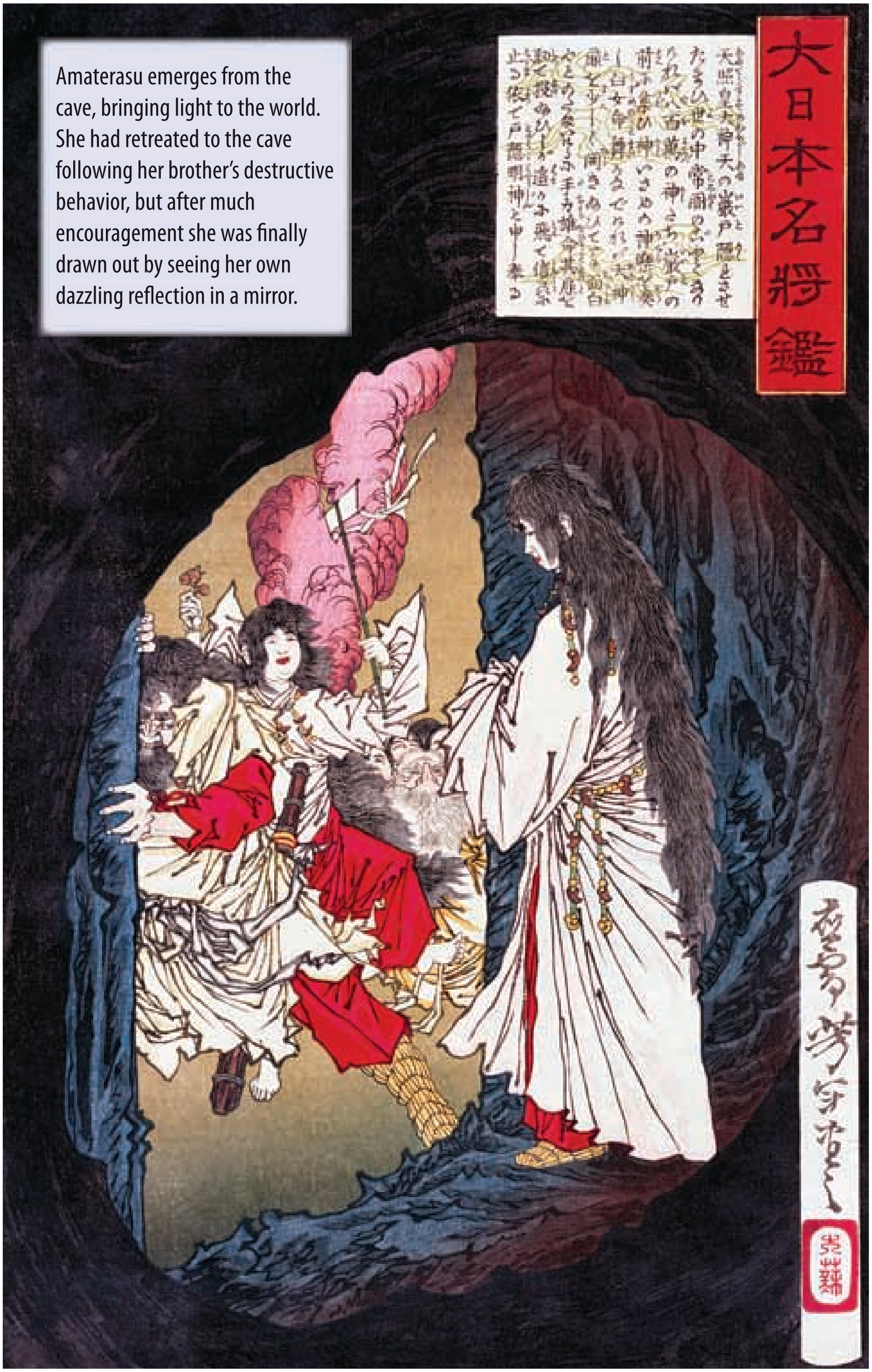
THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SUN AND STORM

Amaterasu's brother, the storm god Susanowo, was a trouble-maker. He wept and blustered, bringing destruction to the fields and mountains of the earth until everything was in turmoil and ruin. Finally Izanagi decided to banish him to the underworld to be with his mother if he did not mend his ways.

The crafty Susanowo played for time. He begged to be allowed to visit his sister, Amaterasu, before he left, and his wish was granted. Knowing her brother's reputation for mischief, Amaterasu asked him for a sign of good faith. As the supreme heavenly *kami,* Amaterasu knew she could create deities at will. Could Susanowo? They agreed on a test. Each would create new deities. If Susanowo could create male deities, Amaterasu would accept his word and let him into her kingdom. If he failed he would have to return to earth.

First Amaterasu broke Susanowo's sword into pieces and ate them. She spat out a mist that became three new female deities. Then she gave Susanowo a string of her jewels, which he ate, spitting out five new male *kami*. Amaterasu took the creation of these deities as proof of Susanowo's good intent. She presented him with the three deities of her own making and admitted him to her realm.

No sooner was Susanowo there than he began to bedevil Amaterasu and her kingdom. He tore down trees. He broke the heavenly dikes and flooded the divine rice fields. He destroyed palace rooms. Finally he seized a celestial horse and skinned it alive, dropping the bloody horse skin onto his heavenly sister and her ladies-in-waiting as they sat peacefully weaving. Then he stood back and laughed at the havoc he had caused.



Amaterasu emerges from the cave, bringing light to the world. She had retreated to the cave following her brother's destructive behavior, but after much encouragement she was finally drawn out by seeing her own dazzling reflection in a mirror.

Furious, Amaterasu retreated to a heavenly cave and refused to come out. Her action plunged the whole earth into darkness, and evil spirits took over the world.

LIGHT RETURNS TO THE WORLD

No amount of coaxing could persuade Amaterasu to return. Finally the heavenly *kami* assembled outside the cave to discuss what to do. There they came up with a plan. First they brought roosters to crow, to give the illusion of the coming of day. Then they brought a great tree to the mouth of the cave, and from it they hung the soft white cloth of the gods and glorious jewels. Finally they positioned a mirror at the mouth of the cave and stationed Tajikara-wo, the god of strength, beside it.

The mirth goddess, Uzume, began to dance. Uzume was not beautiful, but her good humor and merrymaking were contagious. Soon everyone was laughing. The merriment of the gods partying outside her cave made Amaterasu curious. Finally she could stand it no longer and approached the opening of the cave. "Come out and see," the *kami* called. "There is someone out here more beautiful than you." (In J. Hacklin and Clement Huart, *Asiatic Mythology,* a translation from the *Kojiki*.) Amaterasu peeked out, and she was met by her own dazzling reflection in the mirror. Astonished, she stepped outside and Tajikara-wo caught her. Quickly the *kami* placed a rice-straw rope across the cave opening so she could not return to her hiding place, and light came into the world again. The jewels and the mirror that brought Amaterasu from her cave became symbols of her power and part of her heavenly regalia.

The Sun Goddess

The story of Amaterasu's disappearance when she felt herself insulted by her brother, Susanowo, may arise from some natural phenomenon such as an eclipse of the sun. The importance of the tale, however, is that it gives listeners the assurance that Amaterasu, the sun goddess, will never desert them, and that her power will continue forever.

THE CREATION OF THE ANCESTORS

The heavenly *kami* punished Susanowo for his outrageous behavior. First they required him to bring to the council table the objects

PRINCIPAL SHINTO *KAMI*

Amaterasu—The sun goddess and the highest of the heavenly *kami;* she was born from Izanagi's left eye after the death of Izanami.

Hoho'demi—Youngest son of Ninigi; he was the founder of the imperial line.

Inari—*Kami* of rice and protector of all food, prosperity, and lovers and married people, and restorer of stolen items.

Izanagi—One of the Creative Pair. With his wife, Izanami, he was parent to the islands of Japan and many of the major deities.

Izanami—One of the Creative Pair and wife of Izanagi.

Jimmu Tenno—Imperial name of **Toyo-mike-nu,** grandson of Hoho-demi and great-grandson of Ninigi; legendary first emperor of Japan.

Ninigi—Grandson of Amaterasu, the sun goddess, who was sent by her to establish her government on earth.

Oho-kuni-nushi—Descendant of Susanowo; powerful lord of Izumo Province who ceded his land to Ninigi to establish an earthly kingdom.

Susanowo—The storm god; born from Izanagi's nose after the death of Izanami.

Uzume—The mirth goddess, whose humorous dance enticed Amaterasu from the cave of darkness.

Yomi, or Yomi-tsu-kuni—Land of darkness; the Shinto kingdom of death; the underworld.

that symbolized his misdeeds. These were thrown into the sea, carrying with them the evil they contained. Although Susanowo retained a capacity to bring flood and storm, he could never again make the kind of trouble he had caused in Amaterasu's realm. The *kami* then sent him back to earth, banishing him from heaven.

Susanowo took with him to earth the eight deities he and his sister had created. The deities descended to the province of Izumo. There Susanowo wandered the earth. Truly sorry for his misdeeds, he set out to redeem himself in the eyes of his sister and father.

One day Susanowo met an elderly couple and their beautiful young daughter, all weeping. He asked the couple why they were crying, and they told him that they had once had eight beautiful daughters, but a monstrous, eight-headed serpent had come every year and seized a daughter. It had already killed seven daughters, and the couple feared that the time was coming when it would appear and devour this one, their last. Susanowo offered to kill the serpent in exchange for the hand of the daughter, Kushinada-hime, in marriage.

The clever Susanowo filled eight cups with strong rice wine and left them for the serpent. It soon appeared, its eight mouths spitting fire, and quickly lapped up the wine with its eight tongues. When it fell down drunk Susanowo leaped from his hiding place and cut off its eight heads, killing it. Susanowo cut open the serpent's

belly. Inside he found a glorious, jewel-encrusted sword. Susanowo presented the sword to Amaterasu as a token of apology for all the trouble he had caused in heaven. The sword became part of Amaterasu's heavenly regalia.

Susanowo wed Kushinada-hime and together they had many children, who grew up and married local *kami* and became the ancestors of all the people of Japan. Eventually Susanowo's descendants spread over all of Izumo province. One, Ohu-kuni-nushi, became the powerful lord of Izumo.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IMPERIAL LINE

As told in the *Nihongi*, most of the activities of the *kami* took place in the heavens, where Amaterasu reigned supreme.

A dragon sculpted on the bowl of an incense burner. These mythical serpent-like creatures are associated with water and are frequently the emblem of the emperor. The sword, part of Amaterasu's heavenly regalia, was found in the body of a serpent who terrorized the daughters of a family until it was killed by Susanowo.



Other deities visited earth for short periods of time, but local *kami,* some beneficial and others troublesome, along with the many descendants of Susanowo and his children, managed on earth as best they could.

Amaterasu, looking down from on high, noticed that the earth was in continual disorder. Most of Susanowo's descendants behaved decently, but others fought among themselves, and evil spirits ran loose. The world was a noisy place where even the rocks and the trees clamored for their say in how things should go. Amaterasu decided to take the world in hand. At first she turned to her son Amano-Oshihomimi, asking him to go to earth to rule her earthly kingdom. As he stood on the Rainbow Bridge and looked down, he saw so much clamor and dissent in the world that he declined.

Amaterasu then convened a council of the *kami*. They sent a messenger, Amano-Hohi, to earth to look around and report back. When three years had passed with no word from him, the heavenly *kami* sent another messenger, this one armed with bow and arrows. The new messenger, Ame-waka-hiko, had no sooner arrived on earth than he met a maiden whose charms persuaded him to marry her. Eight more years passed with not a single word from earth.

Growing impatient, the heavenly *kami* sent yet another messenger, this time a bird, to search the earth. Ame-waka-hiko mistakenly shot the bird, which barely made it back to heaven. But the *kami* recognized the arrow and realized that their messenger, Ame-waka-hiko, had gone astray.

Now Amaterasu sent two of the heavenly *kami,* Takemikazuchi, the god of thunder, and Futsu-nushi, the god of fire, to earth. Following Amaterasu's orders, the two heavenly *kami* went directly to Izumo, where they met with Oho-kuni-nushi, lord of Izumo and Susanowo's descendant, and asked him to submit to the rule of Amaterasu.

While Oho-kuni-nushi pondered their request, his son tried to resist and attempted to take on the heavenly *kami* in battle. In a one-sided fight, the *kami* defeated him. His sorrowful father

withdrew to Yomi, the land of darkness, to rule over the evil spirits and keep them from harming the living, ceding control of the earth to the *kami*.

The two *kami* returned to the high plains of heaven, where they reported their success to Amaterasu. Once again she turned to her son Amano-Oshihomimi and asked him to go to earth and govern it. Once again he declined, proposing that his son go in his place.

NINIGI, ANCESTOR OF THE IMPERIAL LINE

Ninigi, Amaterasu's grandson, agreed to go to earth to rule. Amaterasu gave him the symbols of her power—the mirror made by the heavenly *kami* to lure her from the cave, her jewels, and the sword taken by Susanowo from the belly of the serpent. "Consider this mirror as you would my soul, and honor it as myself," she told him. The mirror thus became Amaterasu's *shintai,* the object in which her *kami*-spirit lived. Her final words to her grandson were, "May prosperity attend your dynasty and may it, like heaven and earth, endure forever." (In J. Hacklin and Clement Huart, *Asiatic Mythology*, a translation from the *Kojiki*.)

With three *kami* and five exalted beings who served the heavenly *kami,* Ninigi descended to earth. He went first to the island of Kyushu, proceeding to the province of Satsuma. To the five chiefs who accompanied him he gave the responsibility of religious tasks. These exalted beings became the legendary ancestors of the families who formed the Shinto priesthood. Each had a special duty. One guarded the chants and prayers, another cared for shrines and ritual objects, a third was in charge of religious dances, the fourth was to make the sacred mirrors, and the fifth the jeweled swords.

Ninigi fell in love with a young woman of the Satsuma province and asked for her hand in marriage. The young woman's father offered him instead his elder daughter, who, he said, was stronger. But Ninigi

Shintai

The *shintai* is a sacred object symbolizing the essence of the *kami* to whom the shrine is dedicated. The *shintai* is wrapped in silk and placed in a box that is never opened.

chose the younger daughter because, although she was weaker, she was more beautiful. Ninigi's choice, says the *Kojiki*, is the reason that many emperors of Japan do not live long lives.

THE CHILDREN OF NINIGI

Living in Satsuma, Kyushu, Ninigi and his new bride had three sons. The eldest, Ho-deri, grew to be a strong man with a violent temper. He had a magical fishhook that enabled him to catch great numbers of fish. One day his little brother Hoho-demi borrowed the fishhook and lost it. Fearing his brother's anger, Hoho-demi sat weeping on the seashore. The sea deity Shiho-tsuchi found him there and asked what the problem was. He advised Hoho-demi to go to the land of the ruler of the sea, Ohowata-tsumi.

Hoho-demi took the boat Shiho-tsuchi built for him and steered it to the sea god's palace. At the palace gate, he climbed a tree so he could see inside, and he was noticed by Toyo-Tama-bimi, one of the sea god's daughters. She reported the youth's presence to her father, who invited the young prince inside. The two soon married.

Hoho-demi became homesick living in the palace in the land of the sea, and the fishhook was still lost. The sea god Ohowata-tsumi called all the fish of the ocean together. Finally a fish appeared with a sore mouth, and the hook was found. Ohowata-tsumi returned the fishhook to his son-in-law, warning him that his bad-tempered brother might still try to harm him. But Ohowata-tsumi promised that he would help the young man by making water flow wherever he planted rice. He gave Hoho-demi the two magical jewels with which the sea gods ruled the waters: One jewel caused water to rise up, and the other caused it to subside. These jewels gave Hoho-demi great power.

Hoho-demi and Toyo-Tama-bimi went to Hoho-demi's home in Kyushu. Ho-deri was indeed still angry, but Hoho-demi used his magic jewels to make Ho-deri submit to him, and he became the lord of all the nearby lands.

When Toyo-Tama-bimi was about to bear the couple's first child, she asked Hoho-demi to build her a private hut where she

could be alone. He did as she asked, but while she was giving birth, he peeked into the hut and there he saw that his beautiful wife had changed into a sharklike sea monster. Hoho-demi fled and Toyo-Tama-bimi, disgraced, abandoned the child and returned to her home beneath the sea.

JIMMU TENNO, FIRST EMPEROR OF JAPAN

Toyo-Tama-bimi sent her younger sister to Kyushu to care for the young boy she had left behind. When he was grown the two were joined in marriage and had four sons. The youngest of these sons was named Toyo-mike-nu. He left Kyushu and went to the province of Yamato. There he became the first emperor of Japan, taking the name Jimmu Tenno. Later he wed a great-granddaughter of Oho-kuni-nushi, one of Susanowo's descendants, so the two powerful heavenly families of Amaterasu and Susanowo were joined in marriage.

Jimmu Tenno became the legendary founder of the imperial family. The imperial family has occupied the throne since 660 B.C.E. and continues to do so to this day. Today's imperial family traces its ancestry directly to Jimmu Tenno, said to be the great-grandson of Ninigi, the grandson of the sun goddess Amaterasu.

OTHER SHINTO *KAMI*

While the heavenly *kami* and their stories are significant to the imperial line, other *kami* play important roles in the lives of ordinary people.

The wind fills the void between earth and sky so that the sky does not fall. There are four wind gods—a male and a female and their two *kami* helpers. Ancient prayers are addressed to the wind *kami* to keep winds and storms from destroying crops at harvesttime, and many shrines are devoted to the *kami* of wind and thunder. There is also a god of whirlwinds, who must be kept under control so he will not do great harm.

The rain god Taki-okami is a mountain-dwelling *kami;* Kura-okami is a god of rain and snow inhabiting the valleys. Each takes the shape of a dragon or a serpent. But it is the god of waterfalls,



Rice growing in a Japanese field. Hoho-demi was given magic jewels by the ruler of the sea. These jewels made the waters rise whenever rice was planted and subside when it needed harvesting.

Taki-tsu-hiko, who brings rain in time of drought, and Shinto ceremonies for rain are addressed to him.

Kami of springs and wells make water come from the earth. *Kami* inhabit the rivers and traditionally are continually venerated to keep them happy so they will not cause the rivers to overflow their banks. Other *kami* dwell at the mouths of rivers.

THE IMPERIAL LINE AS ESTABLISHED BY THE *KOJIKI*

Izanagi and Izanami, the Creative Pair

|

Amaterasu, the sun goddess

|

Amano-Oshihomimi

|

Ninigi

|

Hoho-demi, founder of the imperial line

|

(**a son,** name unknown)

|

Jimmu Tenno, legendary first emperor of Japan

TREES AND ROCKS

Kami of the fields and woods are numerous. The *kami* of fields is assisted by the *kami* of herbs. But of the earth's flora, trees are especially important. In the countryside a tree may be surrounded by a rice-straw rope to indicate its *kami* nature. The sacred sakaki tree, *Cleyera japonica,* is often planted on shrine grounds; it was a sakaki tree on which the *kami* hung the jewels and mirror that lured Amaterasu out of her cave, and sakaki branches are used in some Shinto rituals. Cypress trees, honored for their long life, also grace many shrines. Trees are richly endowed with *kami:* one deity guards the trunk, the other the leaves; and before one cuts down a tree it is traditional to request permission from Yama-tsumi, a mountain *kami.*

Rocks, which are great and unchanging, may inspire reverence. The god Ohoiwa-Daimyo-jin takes the form of a rock. Rocks and stones are also the *shintai,* or symbols, of many deities, including Taki-tsu-hiko, the god of waterfalls.

LIGHTNING, THUNDER, AND FIRE

The god of sky thunder, representing both thunder and lightning, is called by two names: Kami-nari, "the divine muttering," and Naru-kami, "the thundering god." The thunder god is the patron of bows and arrows, petitioned in times of invasion and threat of war. He also protects trees, bringing on violent storms if they are



The coastline at Shirahama in Kansai province, Japan. Two major sea deities, Ohowata-tsumi and Shiho-tsuchi, hold the jewels that make the sea ebb and flow. Sailors might call upon them for safe journeys on the ocean.

wrongfully cut. Trees struck and disfigured by lightning show the presence of *kami*.

There are also the eight gods of thunder, the Ika-zuchi, who guarded the body of Izanami and chased Izanagi out of Yomi-tsu-kuni. They represent underground rumblings such as earthquakes and volcanoes.

The god of fire, Homu-subi, caused the death of Izanami. But although he may bring destruction, he also starts fire for warmth and for ritual. Special prayers are offered to soothe him.

After his journey to Yomi-tsu-kuni, Izanagi created the Sae-no-kami, or gods of the road. These *kami* protect travelers and keep evil spirits away from them. Their *shintai* is the stick, repre-

senting the one Izanagi threw at his pursuers when he was escaping from the land of the dead.

FOOD AND HOME

There are many *kami* of food, but Inari, the god of rice, is the most highly venerated, and many shrines are dedicated to him. Inari is usually shown riding on a fox, his symbol, and carrying a bag of rice; sometimes Inari himself appears as a fox. As the protector of rice, he is also respected as the provider of all food and of all prosperity. He helps at difficult times of life, protects lovers and married people, and even recovers stolen items. He was long ago considered the patron of swordsmiths; now his patronage is extended to all tradespeople.

The home is the center of much Shinto worship, so each home has its own *kami*—the *kami* of the hearth. There may be a *kami* of the kitchen stove, a *kami* of the hall and of the bedroom, even a *kami* of the toilet, who keeps evil and illness away. In Shinto *kami* are, indeed, everywhere.



A cup and bowls at a tap in the grounds of a shrine. Before entering a shrine to pray to the *kami,* visitors first wash their hands and take a sip of water to cleanse their mouths, but do not touch the original water source with their lips.

SHINTO MYTHOLOGY ANDJAPANESE CULTURE

The traditional tales of Shinto serve many of the same purposes as those of other religions. They answer questions about the origins of a people and their relationship with the heavenly pow-



Each mountain has its own special *kami*. In the summer people make pilgrimages to the great mountains, either to view the mountains from afar or to climb them. Mount Fuji, or Fujiyama, an inactive volcano and Japan's highest, most famous, and most sacred peak, is home to the *kami* Sengen Sama.

ers, and about life and death, and good and evil. In the case of Shinto, however, those tales especially bind the Japanese people to their land and to their history.

In the centuries after Emperor Jimmu Tenno mythical tales gradually gave way to historical records. Yet the celestial origins of Japan and the Japanese people have remained a continuous thread in the national consciousness. The tales of the heavenly *kami* and the creation of Japan have long been a unifying force for the Japanese people, who have traditionally seen themselves as uniquely blessed. As a people they trace their existence to the so-called Creative Pair, Izanagi and Izanami, and their offspring. In a sense the *kami* of Shinto are their distant relatives, and they feel a special kinship with these spirits of their native land.

DIVINE GIFTS TODAY: SEALED FROM HUMAN EYES

The mirror and jewels that Amaterasu gave to Ninigi when she sent him to earth are believed to have been handed down through the imperial line. They are said to be enshrined at Ise, the most sacred of all Shinto shrines. Wrapped in silk and sealed in special containers, they are never seen, even by the priests who guard them. The sword of Susanowo, the third insignia of imperial power, also sealed from human eyes, rests in the shrine at Atsuta, near Nagoya.

CHAPTER 3

EARLY SHINTO AND ITS CHINESE INFLUENCES



No one knows when the people now known as the Japanese first migrated to the Japanese archipelago, or chain of islands, and began to make a home there. They settled on the Yamato Plain south of Nara, the area identified by historians as the place where Japanese culture began. These people had no written language, so their exact origins are unknown; they may have come from the South Seas, Korea, or mainland China, or from other parts of Asia. Archaeological evidence dating from the first millennium B.C.E. suggests that these forerunners of today's Japanese people were a society of hunter-gatherers and fishers. There were native people, the Ainu, on the islands when they arrived, but the newcomers did not mix with them, forming instead their own small farming and fishing villages and settling them with family groups.

Generally people living in a particular geographical area were related, either by blood or by marriage, and they gathered loosely into *uji,* or clans. They came together to celebrate social events such as births, marriages, and deaths, and seasonal events such

Musicians at the Grand Shrine at Ise are shown here performing *Gakaku,* the ancient court music of Japan. Music and dance became important features in Shinto rites, and they remain so, fully supported by the special patronage of the emperor.



as spring planting and fall harvest. The earliest records of Shinto reflect close ties to ancestors and to agricultural fertility and the rhythms of the natural world.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SHINTO RELIGION

The *uji* turned to the spirits of nature to be given the blessings of children and crops. They paid respect to natural forces—sun, wind, rain, and tides. Shinto grew out of this tradition, and echoes of it continue to survive in folk practices such as the prayers that greet the rising sun. Shinto festivals still follow the agricultural calendar of spring rice planting and fall harvest.

Each village and clan had its own local *kami,* mostly related to the region's natural phenomena. Living close to nature, the villagers were dependent on their blessings and whims. From Shinto's earliest beginnings there has been no clear division between religion and culture. People understood that they were continually in the presence of the *kami,* which they saw manifested in great trees and dark woods, large boulders, mountains, and waterfalls. They paid honor and respect to anything they saw that seemed extraordinary, wonderful, or awe-inspiring. Thus there came to be *kami* of fire, wind, rain, thunder, springs, mountains, rivers, food, rice, and all vegetation; *kami* of paths and roads and stones; *kami* of the sea and the rivers; *kami* of home and hearth; *kami* everywhere.

THE *NORITO*

Early Shinto did not have a priesthood. The hereditary head of each *uji* also served as its chief priest. His responsibility as clan chief included being attuned to the instructions of the *kami* and speaking the words that would ensure their continued goodwill. Shinto followers believed that beautiful words, carefully spoken, had a beneficent effect on the *kami* who heard them, bringing blessings, good health, and prosperity.

Oral Links

Mystical words and prayers, called *norito* or *norii,* were handed down orally from father to son, along with the leadership of the clan. *Norito* continue to be used in Shinto rituals.

The *norito,* mystical words and prayers, already ancient in the oral tradition when they were first copied down around the eighth century C.E., are the earliest existing record of prehistoric Shinto. Because the words and phrasing of the *norito* were believed to have ritual power, it is thought that they came down through the ages and generations almost unchanged. Many *norito* are for the success of the rice harvest, because rice was the mainstay of Japanese agricultural life.

NORITO FOR EXORCISM AND PURIFICATION, FROM THE GREAT EXORCISM OF THE LAST DAY OF THE SIXTH MONTH

The Great Exorcism, or Great Purification, takes place at the end of June. It is a ritual to renew the world by removing all impurities and sins. In this *norito* (prayer), as in all Shinto rituals, the words carry great power. Beautiful words of ancient Japanese, recited by Shinto priests, are believed to be pleasing to the *kami,* or deities.

As the gusty wind blows apart the myriad layers of heavenly clouds;
As the morning mists, the evening mist is blown away by the
morning wind, the evening wind;
As the large ship anchored in the spacious port is untied
at the prow and at the stern
And pushed out into the great ocean;
As the luxuriant clump of trees on yonder [hill]
Is cut away at the base with a tempered sickle, a sharp
sickle—
As a result of the exorcism and purification,
There will be no sins left.
They will be taken into the great ocean
By the goddess called Se-ori-tu-hime,
Who dwells in the rapids of the rapid-running rivers
Which fall surging perpendicular
From the summits of the high mountains and the
summits
of the low mountains.

(In *Norito—A New Translation of the Ancient Japanese Ritual Prayers,* translated by Donald L. Philippi.)

The *Kami* Power of Stones

The Japanese empress Jingo (170–269 C.E.) was expecting a child when war broke out between Japan and Korea. Almost at the point of giving birth, she still felt it necessary to be with her army. She put stones on her belly, and with their aid she was able to lead her soldiers in battle. The stones, which came to be known as the stones that lighten the pains of childbirth, became objects of respect and worship. Today they are preserved at a shrine in Hizen province in Kyushu.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY SHINTO

The ritual year in Shinto followed the farming cycle. Although different villages might celebrate at slightly different times, in general the people came together to celebrate spring planting, fall harvest, the new year, and events in between and to ask for aid or give thanks for blessings. At each festival people gathered to ask that their sins be taken away and that they be made pure, to request blessings, and to thank the *kami* for their goodness toward their village or region.

In addition to the heavenly *kami,* the local *kami,* and the *kami* of nature being venerated, ancestors, outstanding people, and the imperial family came to be considered *kami* as well, so that the pantheon, or collection of all Shinto deities, eventually swelled to about 8 million. Many of these *kami* were tutelary deities; that is, they were the special *kami* of a particular village, region, or even household, and thus not universally worshipped or even known outside their own districts. Each village had boundary deities at its entrance and a town or village shrine where people gathered to pay their respects to clan *kami,* those deities under whose special protection they lived. In addition there might be other sacred sites for particular *kami:* a waterfall, a hill, a place where a *kami* had appeared or where *kami* presence had been experienced.

THE SACRED PLACES OF EARLY SHINTO

At first there were no shrines or temple buildings. People worshipped in natural places that had *kami* presence—at waterfalls and on mountaintops, beneath great trees, beside majestic rocks, on the shore—and they marked these places with ropes of rice-straw, signifying their *kami* nature. To these places the people brought objects such as mirrors, jewels, and swords, which they

felt captured the mystical presence of the *kami*. Later they began to build small, simple structures in the style of their own homes and storage buildings as shrines to which the *kami* might be called. Shinto shrines were never built as gathering places where worshippers could assemble. They were for the use of the *kami* only. Rituals at which people gathered were held outdoors, not inside the shrines.

THE GROWTH OF THE CLANS

In the centuries before 600 B.C.E. the clans grew and strengthened their influence. The *uji* joined together, with the larger, more powerful clans absorbing the smaller, weaker ones. When one clan took over another, its guardian *kami* became the other clan's *kami* as well, and people turned to worship the deity of their new

The Ainu, the indigenous people of Japan, performing a ceremony to honor the spirits of nature. According to tradition, Jimmu Tenno, believed to be the first emperor of Japan and founder of the imperial line that has occupied the throne to this day, drove the native people, the Ainu, from the islands of Japan in 660 B.C.E. The culture of the Ainu people has, however, survived and communities live primarily in Hokkaido, northern Japan.



leaders. Amaterasu, the sun goddess, was originally the deity of the Yamato clan, from which the Japanese imperial line emerged. As that clan grew in power and prestige, Amaterasu was eventuelevated to the position of supreme heavenly *kami* of all Japan.

According to tradition Jimmu Tenno, the legendary first emperor of Japan, arrived among the *uji* around 660 B.C.E., driving the native Ainu from the Yamato region of central Japan and becoming the clans' priest and ruler. By the end of the second century C.E. the imperial system was well established, with powerful clan rulers paying homage to an emperor who presided over the imperial court.

Most Japanese, however, were little affected by the doings of the court. They lived as peasants, farming or fishing as their ancestors had before them, paying their respects to the tutelary *kami* of their own village and shrine.

THE ARRIVAL OF CHINESE CULTURE

Not far from Japan's shores lies China, with its ancient and highly developed culture. During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), China invaded and colonized Korea, bringing Chinese influence even closer to Japan. From as early as 57 C.E. Chinese scholars and artisans traveled to Japan at the invitation of the Japanese court, and Chinese culture became especially strong from around 200 C.E.

Japan at the time was still quite undeveloped. It had no writing system and therefore no recorded poetry or literature. It had crafts but little graphic art (drawing or painting) and no centralized government—all things that China had had for more than a thousand years.

The written word was one of the most important cultural advances to come from China to Japan. Gradually the Japanese adopted the Chinese writing sys-

CONFUCIAN RULES AND CONDUCT

In the Confucian system each person had a duty to the other, and specific rules of conduct and courtesy governed all relationships. For example, in the parent-to-child relationship, parents had a duty to love and care for their child, and the child had a duty to love and be obedient to his or her parents, both in life and after death. The relationship of ruler to subject was similar, and of central importance to Confucianism. Husbands and wives had a duty to live harmoniously, and friends had a duty to be honest and fair in their dealings with one another.

tem, fitting it to their own language. This advance eventually enabled them to write down the oral history of their country and the basis of the Shinto religion. But in addition to the written word, the Chinese brought something that had a profound effect on Japan: their religions. In China Confucianism and Daoism were already highly developed religious traditions. Each would influence Shinto in its own way.

The Confucian Ideal

Confucianism held intelligence and learning in high regard. Because education was mainly a Confucian ideal, the Chinese teachers from whom the Japanese elite learned reading and writing were Confucian. As they learned writing the Japanese naturally acquired the Confucian worldview and the philosophy of its teachers.

CONFUCIANISM

The orderly Confucian system had a powerful influence on the Japanese people. With its emphasis on proper relationships between people, respect for ancestors, and order and moderation, Confucianism appealed greatly to the Japanese court. Confucianism taught that everything in nature, of which people are a part, had its place. Therefore, each person too had a place in one of the five human relationships: three within the family and two without. According to Confucianism harmony in families, in society, and finally between earth and heaven came from the proper observance of these five relationships: parent to child, husband to wife, older brother to younger brother, friend to friend, and ruler to subject.

In Confucianism the Japanese recognized truths inherent in Shinto. Honesty, fairness, harmony, and ancestor worship were all Shinto ideals. The Confucian emphasis on family, too, was familiar and helped to reinforce the importance of the imperial line. The Japanese adopted many of the Confucian principles, particularly the familial duties, while retaining their belief in the *kami* and worshipping at Shinto shrines.

DAOISM

Although Confucianism was the dominant religious and philosophical tradition of China, China's other religious tradition, Daoism, was also strong, especially among the laboring classes.

The Waving Cat

An emperor one day passed by a cat, which seemed to wave to him. Taking the cat's motion as a sign, the emperor paused and went to it. Diverted from his journey, he realized that he had avoided a trap that had been laid for him just ahead. Since that time, cats have been considered wise and lucky spirits in the Shinto religion. Many shrines and homes include a figurine of a cat with one paw upraised—the waving cat.

So along with Confucianism the Chinese, through teachers and merchants, brought their Daoist beliefs to Japan. Daoism emphasized being in harmony with the flow of the universe. Like Shinto, it regarded nature with respect. Daoism's focus on the *Dao,* the great force behind all things in the universe, and its contemplative side had little impact on the Japanese mind of the time. But the practice of "religious" Daoism, which, like Shinto, had folk origins, fitted in well with Shinto belief.

Daoism never had the lasting effect on Japanese life that Confucianism had, but it did influence Shinto belief and practice in more subtle ways. Daoism was more highly developed than Shinto. It had more ritual and customs than Shinto did. It had a variety of gods who represented natural phenomena, much like Shinto, and some of those gods were incorporated into the Japanese pantheon. Daoism was also concerned with an intricate calendar of good and bad days, and this calendar become part of Shinto as well.

Daoist practitioners had rituals for interpreting signs, foretelling the future, and choosing appropriate places for siting buildings, practices that were eventually linked to Shinto. By the early eighth century C.E. the Japanese court had set up a bureau of divination, modeled on a similar Chinese agency, to determine lucky dates for governmental events and to interpret omens such as natural phenomena.

BUDDHISM

While the Japanese government was allying itself with Confucianism and reforming itself along Confucian lines, another religion, Buddhism, came to Japan at approximately the same time. That religion was by far the most influential religious tradition to enter Japan from the outside world.

Buddhism came to Japan from China by way of Korea, as Confucianism and Daoism had earlier. The official date for Buddhism's introduction to Japan is 552 C.E., although Buddhist priests had no doubt visited Japanese shores centuries earlier. But sometime in the mid-sixth century a Korean king sent a delegation to the Yamato ruler asking for military aid. With the delegation came priests in saffron-yellow robes, banging on gongs and chanting and carrying with them ceremonial umbrellas, banners, Buddhist scriptures, and an image of the Buddha crafted of fine metals such as gold.

Statue of a seated Buddha holding an alms bowl in the grounds of a Buddhist temple. Buddhism had a great appeal to the Japanese people who appreciated its ethics, philosophy, and rituals and it quickly became influential.



Buddhism had an immediate and powerful effect on the Japanese people. It came to Japan as a mature, established tradition with a highly developed philosophy and elaborate rituals. Its color and pageantry, as well as its ethics, appealed to both the rulers and the masses, and it spread quickly throughout the country. Buddhist philosophy, particularly the elimination of earthly suffering through awakening to a higher peace, was also attractive to the Japanese mind.



A Shinto shrine in a remote setting at the top of a mountain in Sendai, Japan. Shrines in these natural settings are often associated with *kami* who dwell in the features of the landscape and whose presence had been felt in that area.

Although it was new to Japan, Buddhism had traits that were familiar to Shinto worshippers. Like Shinto, it had many deities, a similarity that helped to foster its acceptance. Also like Shinto, it was tolerant of other beliefs and adapted easily to different situations.

On the other hand, Buddhism provided belief systems through the Buddha's teachings on karma, samsara, and nirvana and the path to achieve final release from rebirth through the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Shinto had not offered this type of teaching and people had not found it in the orderly Confucian system, with its emphasis on rules for proper relationships between people, and on good government.

Buddhism also satisfied an important need that Shinto had not addressed. It offered the comfort of life after death, whereas Shinto, more deeply rooted in naturalism, offered a realistic view of the natural world and merely accepted death as the end of existence. Following a death Shintoists purified themselves to remove death's polluting taint. Worthy dead, particularly members of the imperial family, might become *kami,* but Shinto offered no passage to a better place. Buddhism did, and it also had funeral rites, which Shinto lacked. Shinto followers embraced this aspect of Buddhism, along with its philosophy and ritual.

PRINCE SHOTOKU AND TAIKA REFORM

The rise of strong clan rule had been marked by strife among the various clan heads, with the Yamato clan generally emerging as the most powerful. After the clans gave way to the imperial throne in the sixth century, the imperial line continued to experience conflict within itself. Around 600 C.E. a family power struggle led to the removal of Empress Suiko's authority. Her nephew, a young prince named Shotoku, became her regent, ruling the country in her name. In Shotoku the religious traditions of Japan and China blended to create an individual of great refinement and statecraft.

Prince Shotoku is credited with creating a 17-article Japanese constitution. This document, written in 609, blended Buddhist

ethics with Confucian governmental structure. More than a statement of law, it was a collection of ethical beliefs by which governmental officials were to conduct themselves. In 645, some years after Shotoku's death, Kotoku became emperor and instituted changes in the Japanese government along Confucian lines, known as the Taika Reform.

Principally Shotoku's constitution encouraged people to abandon the custom of having power divided among many clan chiefs, of which some were more powerful than others, and to look on the emperor as the supreme ruler of the land. The Taika Reform strengthened the central government and instituted ranks at the imperial court. Its laws controlled Japanese life and still have an impact today.

THE ALLIANCE OF CONFUCIANISM AND SHINTO

The emphasis placed on a strong imperial line by the Taika Reform worked to Shinto's advantage. Confucians benefited from their alliance with the imperial court, and the court was Shinto. The Confucians supported Shinto, and Shinto and Confucianism complemented each other. Confucianism brought education, organization, and a political system to the Japanese court, while Shinto provided the mythological basis for imperial power. Among other things, the government built and maintained Shinto shrines.

It was during this period, in 673, that Emperor Temmu ordered a court historian to commit the oral history of Japan to memory so that the "records of ancient matters," particularly those establishing the celestial origins of the imperial line, would not be lost or corrupted by change. By 712 that history was recorded in the *Kojiki*, the written account of the mythic beginnings of Japan and the Japanese people. It was followed in 720 by the *Nihongi*, the record of the earliest emperors.

Together the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi* established Shinto orthodoxy and the divine origins of the imperial line and firmly established Shinto as the religion of the emperor's court in Japan. Their influence lasted many centuries.

SHINTO AND THE RELIGIONS OF CHINA

For the Japanese, Daoism's appeal lay in its appreciation of nature and its many deities, closely paralleling Shinto beliefs, and from it they took its practices of divining the future. Confucianism stressed respect for the emperor and order, which had been Shinto ideals, but it had evolved into an orderly bureaucratic system of government that was practical and efficient. The Japanese eventually adopted this Confucian model and incorporated it into their Shinto system, along with its code of ethics. Buddhism had many aspects in common with Shinto, but it offered more color and ceremony as well as philosophical depth, and had wide appeal for Shinto followers.

Shinto took on characteristics of the competing religions. During the time that the capital was at Nara, from 644 to 764, the emphasis on Shinto rites in a natural setting gave way to the idea that the shrine was the home of the *kami*. A form of Shrine Shinto emerged in which priests performed rites as if the *kami* were present. A *shimpo,* or divine treasure, was placed in the shrine to signify the presence of *kami*. The treasure was often swords; archery equipment, such as a bow and arrows, arm guards, and quiver; ceremonial clothing; and harps and bells made by the finest artisans. Every 20 years the shrine was rebuilt with new materials and the divine treasure renewed. The old treasures and materials were ceremoniously buried on shrine grounds.

CHAPTER 4

JAPANESE RELIGION IN MEDIEVAL TIMES



From its earliest beginnings Shinto had always been concerned with earthly life. The introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century C.E. brought notions of the end of earthly suffering and an awakening to a higher plane of consciousness. These were exciting new ideas to the Japanese, and from its first appearance in Japan, Buddhism found fertile ground for growth. The form of Buddhism that came to Japan was known as Mahayana Buddhism, which liberally interpreted the Buddha's teachings, making it easier for Buddhism to adapt to Japanese ways.

THE TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA

Buddhism originated in India around the sixth century B.C.E. According to legend a young Indian prince, Siddhartha Gautama, later known as Sakyamuni, who had been carefully protected by his loving family from the cares of the world, suddenly became aware of the suffering around him. He vowed to find the cause and solution for worldly sorrow and pain.

Gautama left his family to join a group of Hindu ascetics, or people who give up pleasures and sometimes even the necessi-

A photograph of a torii leading to a Shinto shrine taken at the turn of the 20th century by a European traveler, Richard Gordon Smith.



ties of life for religious purposes, but his new life did not reveal the answers he sought. He left them and sat beneath a tree to meditate. Many temptations later he came to an understanding that human suffering came from desire. Having defeated desire and achieved inner harmony, Gautama became Buddha, the Enlightened One. Buddha gathered followers and preached his message of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, which were rules for living .

BUDDHA'S RULES AND GUIDELINES

Buddha's Four Noble Truths were these:

- *Suffering consists of disease, old age, and death; of separation from those we love; of craving what we cannot obtain; and of hating what we cannot avoid.*
- *All suffering is caused by desire and the attempt to satisfy our desires.*
- *Therefore, suffering can be overcome by ceasing to desire.*
- *The way to end desire is to follow the Eightfold Path.*

(In Madhu Bazaz Wangu, *World Religions: Buddhism.*)

The Eightfold Path was a series of eight stages that led a Buddhist follower to the end of desire. The stages on the Eightfold Path were these:

- Right opinion
- Right intentions
- Right speech
- Right conduct
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right concentration

FOLLOWING THE PATH

Buddha's rules for living were simple enough to be readily understood, but they were deceptively difficult to achieve. The early steps on the Eightfold Path were fairly easy for people to follow, but in the later stages the path grew progressively more challenging. The path required that followers conquer all evil thoughts and actions, keeping only good in their minds and hearts, something that could be accomplished only through great discipline and determination. Yet the clarity and simplicity of the eight stages of the path held out the hope that they could be achieved by anyone who was willing to strive for them, a key to Buddhism's great popular appeal.

REACHING NIRVANA

Buddha also cautioned his followers to avoid extremes, either in pleasure-seeking or in severe self-denial, and to take the path of moderation, another ideal that people found appealing.

Since pain and suffering in life were caused by desire, people could reach nirvana, a higher state of consciousness or



A Japanese Buddhist monk collecting food alms from visitors on the path to a temple. Giving alms to monks is a way of accumulating merit and improving karma.

enlightenment, by controlling desire for earthly things. Meditation was the way to control desire. Buddhism also offered life after death through reincarnation. This tenet of Buddhism held that people may have to live through several lives, with each life controlled by karma, or fate. A person's karma determined rewards or punishments according to past lives.

BUDDHISM SPREADS

Buddhism spread quickly beyond India's boundaries and across China and other East Asian countries. By the time it reached Japan it was highly organized. It had a monastic community, a strong philosophical basis, and many rituals. The Japanese delighted not only in its philosophy but also in its beauty and pageantry.

While continuing to rely on Shinto to provide a rationale for the authority of the emperor through his divine origins, the Japanese court of the sixth century C.E. embraced Buddhism. By the seventh century the government required every family to belong to a Buddhist temple and every home to have a Buddhist altar. It was mandatory for every province to have a 16-foot image of the Buddha and to support the building of Buddhist monasteries and 7-storied pagodas, temples built like multilevel towers.

BUDDHISM AND SHINTO IN HARMONY

Shinto altars remained, however, and the two religions began a long and close relationship, with people celebrating local Shinto festivals as well as celebrating Buddhist holy days and worshipping deities of both religions. The grounds of Buddhist temples, which were large and very elaborate buildings, often contained smaller, simpler Shinto shrines so that people on their way to worship in one might also conveniently worship at the other.

Late in the sixth century, shortly after Buddhism had begun to take root, Japan

Links with Shinto

The union of Buddhism and Shinto in the sixth century is described in the *Nihongi*. According to that source the Japanese were at first afraid that worshipping Buddhist gods would make the *kami* angry and jealous. But Buddhism's appeal was so strong that people began worshipping the Buddhas regardless.

suffered an epidemic that sickened and killed large numbers. The people took it as a sign that the *kami* were angry that they had begun to worship Buddhist gods. They threw away their Buddhist statues and returned to the Shinto shrines. But soon another omen was interpreted to mean that the *kami* and the Buddhist gods might work together in harmony. Buddhism returned, this time to stay. By the seventh century it was well established.

SHINGON BUDDHISM

At the beginning of the ninth century C.E. a Japanese Buddhist scholar named Kukai (774–835) traveled to China to study. When he returned he founded a Buddhist sect on Japan's Mount Koya (near Osaka). Kukai, later known as Kobo Daishi, or the Great Teacher Kobo, is remembered and honored not only for his role as a religious leader but also for his talents in the arts and literature. His form of Buddhism, Shingon, with its elaborate rituals and art, quickly won acceptance in the Japanese court.

RYOBU SHINTO

Kobo Daishi also created the doctrine of Ryobu, or double-aspect Shinto. He incorporated many elements of Shinto into his teachings, blending the two religions. Shingon Buddhism identified major Shinto deities with manifestations of Buddhas, the many forms in which Buddha appeared to the faithful.

Buddhist scholars taught that the Buddhist deities were the true forms of spiritual reality, and that Shinto deities were the reflection of that reality. The heavenly Shinto sun goddess Amaterasu was identified with an important Buddha who was originally a sun god. Amaterasu's storm-god brother, Susanowo, became identified with a Buddhist deity of love and marriage, a manifestation of Bhaisajya-guru, the Buddhist deity of healing.

Buddhist priests served at Shinto shrines, bringing with them Buddhist art, music, and ritual. They celebrated festivals along with Shinto priests and took to performing funerals, which had never been conducted at Shinto shrines. Shrines lost their simple, stripped-down character, becoming more elaborate both

HACHIMAN

More Shinto shrines are dedicated to the deity Hachiman than to any other single *kami*. Originally Hachiman was the *kami* associated with copper mining and with the Minamoto clan. When the building of Buddhist temples required vast amounts of precious metals, emissaries of the emperor went to his shrine to appeal for more gold to be discovered. Gold was found, and a shrine to Hachiman was erected in the capital, where he was much honored for the blessings he had provided. The court turned to Hachiman for protection against epidemics and to calm social unrest. Later he took on the role of war deity and was asked to protect Japan in battle.

Emperor Ojin (ca. 270–ca. 310) was believed to be the spirit of Hachiman reborn into a living *kami*. Ojin/Hachiman was revered by Kobo Daishi, founder of Shingon Buddhism, and he came to be worshipped in the Buddhist faith as well. Hachiman inspired a great deal of Ryobu Shinto art. By the ninth century statues and paintings portray him as a Buddhist monk, in an early blending of Shinto and Buddhism. He frequently appears in works of art as part of a triad of *kami*, along with his mother, Empress Jingo, and his principal wife, Nakatsu-himi, who are considered *kami* as well.

in architecture and in decoration. It soon became difficult to tell a Buddhist temple from a Shinto shrine.

Although many branches of the imperial family tree were Buddhist, Shinto remained the official religion of the Japanese court. Ryobu Shinto, which began as an accommodation to Buddhism, endured into the 19th century.

TENDAI BUDDHISM

Late in the ninth century, at about the same time that Shingon was founded by Kobo Daishi, the Buddhist monk Saicho, also known as Dengyo Daishi, founded the Tendai sect at Mount Hiei, near Kyoto, Japan. The Tendai Buddhists believed that simple acts, such as reciting words of faith to the Buddhist deity Amida, could bring enlightenment. The Tendai Buddhists took their close relationship to the mountain on which their sect was located from Shinto, as it was long associated with the worship of mountain *kami*. Both Shingon and Tendai Buddhism incorporated elements of Shinto that made them more readily acceptable to the Japanese people.

BUDDHISM GROWS AND CHANGES

Between the 12th and 14th centuries three new Buddhist sects appeared in Japan. They were Pure Land, Nirichen, and Zen Buddhism. Their founders were originally Tendai Buddhists, but they each took different directions. Under their teachings a simpler, more direct form of Buddhism moved out of the monasteries to the Japanese people.

PURE LAND

Like Tendai Buddhists, the Pure Land Buddhists focused their worship on the Amitabha Buddha, who lives in a heavenly land located in the west, called the Western Pure Land. This sect was simplicity itself, requiring only that worshippers place complete faith in the benevolence of Amitabha. By reciting the words namu Amida Butsu, "I place my faith in Amida Buddha," anyone might be reborn into paradise. Pure Land Buddhism became very popular throughout Japan.

NICHIREN

Nichiren (1222–81) was a Buddhist reformer who wanted to eliminate all other forms of Buddhism. He preached that Japan could become an earthly paradise if people followed his way and his way only, to the benefit of both the individual and the state. Nichiren taught that the phrase namu Myho Rengekyo, "I place my faith in the Lotus Sutra," would bring about a resolution of problems. Nichiren Buddhism appealed to the nationalistic feelings that had long been fostered by Shinto.

ZEN BUDDHISM AND SHINTO

Zen Buddhism came to Japan in the 12th century by way of China, where it had incorporated many elements of Daoism. It brought the belief that all creatures carry the Buddha nature within them and that enlightenment may come intuitively, through meditation. Its simplicity and discipline, its refinement, and particularly the belief in the Buddha nature of all things appealed to the Japanese, who found in it echoes of the Shinto belief in the *kami* nature of all things.

By now Shinto and Buddhist priests, temples, and festivals had become almost interchangeable, and it was difficult to tell the difference between Buddhism and Shinto. Like Shinto, Zen celebrated the beauties of nature and held people to standards of purity and goodness. The art and culture that grew out of this period—stylized gardens; *ikebana,* or flower arranging; *sumi-e,* ink-brush drawings with delicate shading and simplicity of line;

Rocks and raked gravel in the garden of a Zen monastery symbolizing a natural landscape of mountains and water to encourage calm meditation and clarity of mind. These gardens were influenced by the Chinese idea of the garden as a world in miniature and in Japan this idea was simplified even further.



haiku, poems that portray a single image in 17 syllables—reflect both Buddhist and Shinto ideals, and many of the arts of the period are claimed by both traditions.

THE RISE OF THE SHOGUNS

Although revered by the people, Japanese emperors rarely ruled the country directly. They were often figureheads, presiding over little more than the imperial court. Real power shifted from place to place as various families emerged as regional leaders. By the time Zen arrived in Japan in the 12th century, the emperor was a powerless but sacred personage living in splendid isolation from the people and serving as the high priest of the Shinto religion.

Beyond the imperial walls, however, a fierce power struggle was going on between clans. At the end of the century the Minamoto clan emerged as the victors in the struggle, and they reorganized the government along military lines. The land was ruled by a powerful shogun, a title that corresponds roughly to "highest general."

The shogun divided Japan into feudal territories, each ruled by a daimyo, or lord, a regional ruler who kept peace with the aid of samurai, a warrior class. Japan continued to be governed by mili-

tary leaders and periodically torn by civil war for the next 400 years.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SHINTO GOVERNMENT



A traditional samurai helmet being worn during the reenactment of a feudal battle between rival shoguns.

In 1549, during this period of civil turmoil, Jesuit priests from Spain, led by Francisco de Xavier—who was declared Saint Francis Xavier by the Catholic Church in 1622—brought Christianity to Japan. Although Japan, like all of Asia, had a long history of welcoming and incorporating other traditions into its religious mix, Christianity never truly prospered there.

Christianity was very different from other faiths that the Japanese had known. The Judeo-Christian notion of God and the requirement of faith in a heavenly father diverged widely from a world with 8 million *kami* who resided in all of the forces of nature. The insistence of the missionaries that would-be Christians abandon all other gods and follow the one true God baffled people who were accustomed to believing in many gods and practicing more than one religion simultaneously. Buddhism, like Daoism and Confucianism, had accommodated itself to Shinto ways, and vice versa. Christianity would not do that.

Initially the officially Shinto government welcomed Christian missionaries and allowed them to set up missions in the hope that Christianity would help to weaken Buddhism, which had acquired great political clout. Over the next hundred years, however, Christianity gained enough of a toehold to be perceived by the Japanese government as a threat. Christian missionaries would go into a territory and attempt to convert the daimyo, who might then order all of the people in his district to become Christians as well.

The number of Christian converts was relatively small, but in abandoning Shinto and Buddhism, those converts were rejecting the whole foundation on which the imperial system and the Japanese government were based. Moreover, the Christians were under the influence of European forces, as represented by the Spanish priests. The government therefore viewed the budding Christian movement with alarm.

TOKUGAWA RULE

A powerful shogun named Ieyasu emerged in 1603. By 1615 he and his family of military rulers, the Tokugawa, had unified Japan and centralized their power. They moved the capital from Kyoto, where it had been since 794, to Edo (now Tokyo). Under the Tokugawa, Japan would remain at peace for the next 250 years.

The Tokugawa government required all families to register as "members" of their local Buddhist temple, and temple membership was made hereditary. These policies enabled the rulers to



Nijo castle in Kyoto. The original castle was built between 1602 and1603 by Tokugawa Ieyasu as a residence and as headquarters of the Tokugawa shogunate. The official establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603 and the resignation of the final shogun in 1867 both took place at Nijo castle.

keep track of the populace. People had to report to the temple all births, marriages, deaths, and changes of address.

Along with the requirement to join a Buddhist temple came an attempt to suppress Christianity as an unhealthy foreign influence. This ultimately led to an armed uprising of Japanese Christians. The uprising only served to amplify the government's fears about European tampering in Japanese affairs. After the unsuccessful uprising Christianity was officially banned. The Christian movement went underground, where it remained in secret for the next 200 years.

In the 1630s the third Tokugawa ruler, Iemitsu, expelled all foreigners from Japan and closed its ports to all European traders. Because they had not tried to spread Christianity among the Japanese, a few Dutch merchants were permitted to carry on restricted trade from the island of Deshima in Nagasaki Bay, but they were not allowed to leave the island except to report to the shogun at Edo once a year. At the same time laws were passed forbidding Japanese to leave Japan. A curtain of isolation fell between Japan and the rest of the world. This period lasted for 215 years.

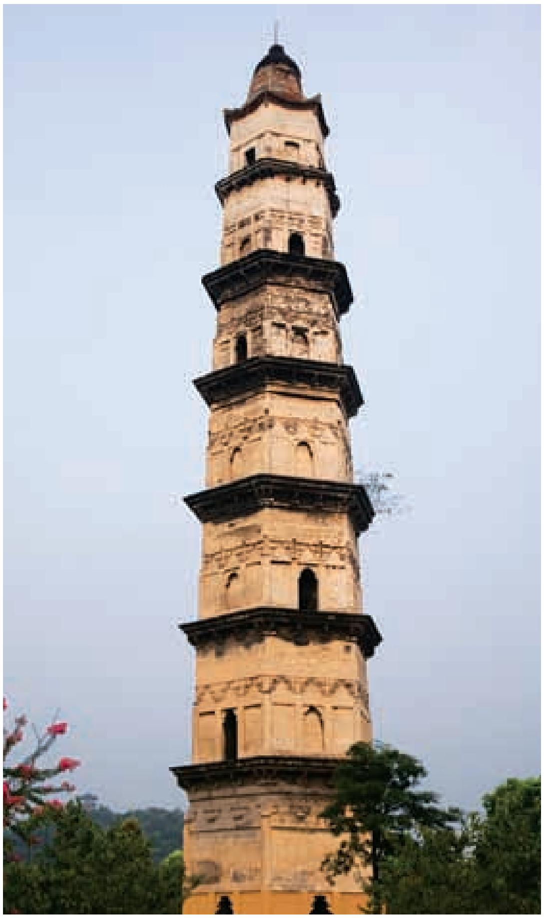
SHINTO UNDER THE TOKUGAWA

Although it was mandated, Buddhism never completely replaced other religions in Japan. Shinto *kami* were worshipped in Buddhist temples, and Shinto shrines still attracted families for spring and fall festivals, new year celebrations, and special occasions such as the birth of a child.

Shinto continued to flourish during Tokugawa times. The Tokugawa government, officially Shinto, was arranged on Confucian lines, and Confucianism and Shinto had long been allied. What came to be known as Tokugawa values and traditions permeated Japanese culture. They included reverence for the *kami* for the blessings of nature, respect for parents and worship of ancestors, and loyalty to the government. Fundamentally Confucian but imbued with Shinto, those values continue to underlie Japanese culture.

Tokugawa society was arranged in a strict hierarchical structure that stressed loyalty and service to the government. Warriors, because they protected the state, had the highest status. Farmers, who produced food for the people, came next, followed by workers, who served others and were therefore good for society. At the bottom of the list were merchants, who lived by selling what others produced. There was little movement between classes. Most people continued to live by agriculture, farming, and fishing, as their ancestors had before them.

Great Mercy Pagoda, Shaoxing, China. After the arrival of Buddhism in Japan in the sixth century, Buddhist architectural styles began to exert an influence over traditional Shinto design. Japanese carpenters adapted the Chinese style of pagoda, combining their own techniques with imported styles.



SHINTO RENEWAL

The Tokugawa shoguns demanded order, obedience, loyalty, and calm. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries a relative peace settled on the Japanese islands. As the period of warfare and civil strife faded into memory, scholars turned their attention to history, literature, and the arts. At first they concentrated on the Chinese classics and Buddhism, but soon they began to study Japan's native culture. One daimyo of the Tokugawa line brought together scholars and assembled the first history of Japan.

Scholars turned next to early Shinto literature, collecting tales and writing them down. The Shinto calendar of lucky and unlucky days, based on the Chinese/Daoist tradition, was revived, and Shinto festivals were encouraged. The government still maintained Shinto shrines, and people gathered regularly at festivals to give thanks to the *kami* for their many blessings.

Buddhist scholars had long taught that Buddhist deities represented divine reality, and that the Japanese *kami* were their

NORITO FOR A GOOD HARVEST

Not all *norito*—mystical words and prayers believed to have ritual power—were passed down (originally orally) from ancient times. Some, like this one, were composed later, and some even continue to be written today. Typically, these more recently written *norito* call on the *kami* to hear the prayers of the people for help with practical concerns of the time, including a rich harvest and the continuing bounty of the earth.

> *Now that His Imperial Majesty, about to make the beginning of the rice crop for this year, has caused offerings to be presented in abundance, do we [coming] cleansed and purified into thy great presence, make offerings—of food offerings: soft rice and rough rice; of drink offerings: making high the tops of the wine jars and arranging in full rows the bellies of the wine jars; of things that live in the blue sea-plain, things broad of fin and things narrow of fin, even to grasses of the offing and grasses of the shore—all these do we offer in abundance; and as the full and glorious sun of this day of life and plenty rises, do thou hear to the end these words of praise, in tranquillity and peace. [Grant that] all things that may be grown, beginning with the late-ripening rice which will be produced by the people by stirring with arms and hands the foamy waters and by drawing the mud together between the opposing thighs, and extending even to the part blade of grass, [grant that they] may not meet with evil winds or violent waters; prosper them with abundance and luxuriance, and make the Festival of New Food to be celebrated in sublimity and loveliness. Thus, with dread, we declare the ending of the words of praise.*
>
> (In Daniel C. Holtom, *The National Faith of Japan*.)

worldly "trace" or reflection. Now Shinto scholars reversed the doctrine, holding that the *kami* were the true divinities of Japan and that the Buddhist deities were a reflection of them. Confucianism and Buddhism were de-emphasized, and Shinto was once again elevated in religious importance.

CHAPTER 5

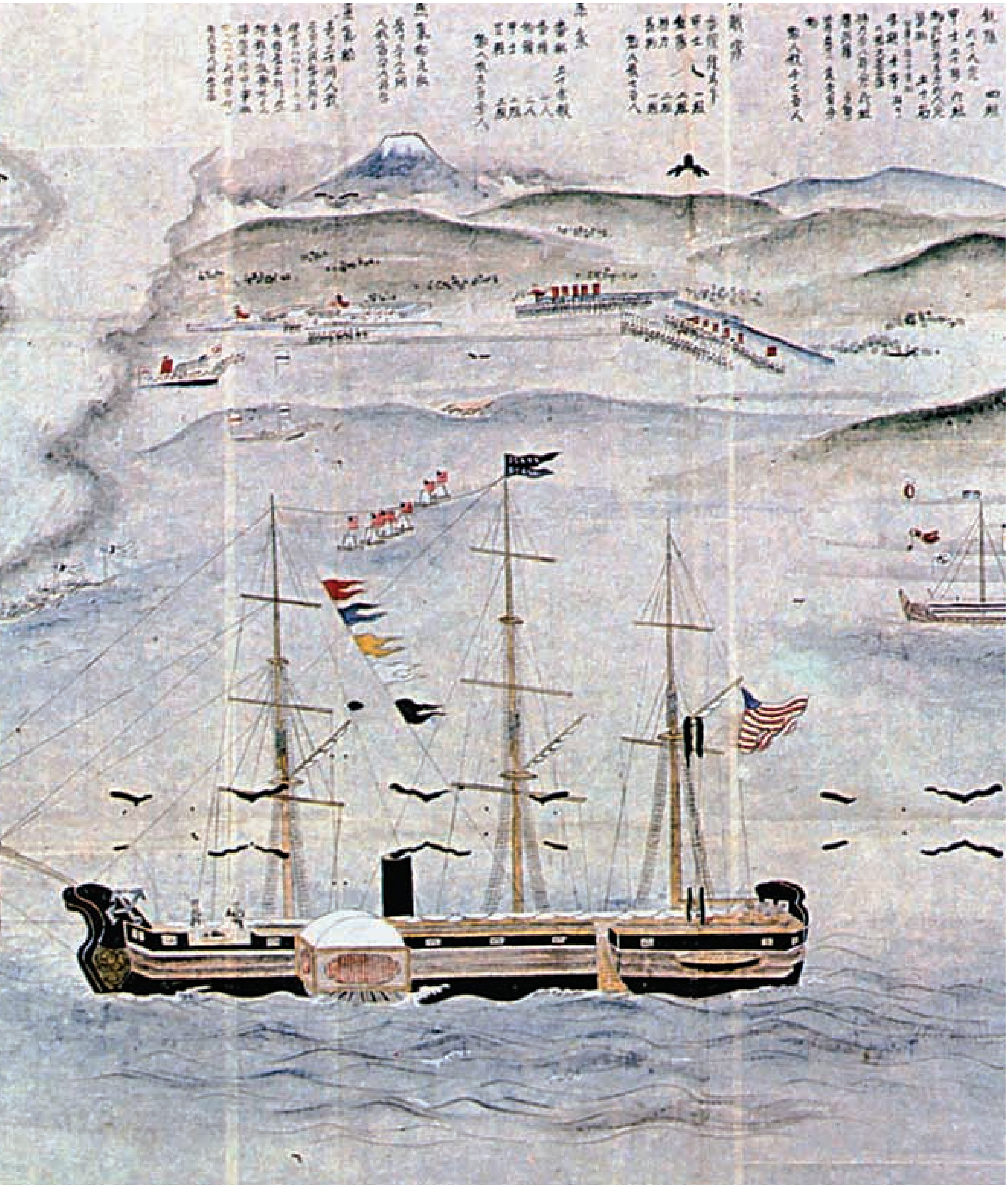
SHINTO AND JAPANESE NATIONALISM: 1868–1945

By the mid-1800s Japan had been effectively isolated from the rest of the world for more than 200 years. Japanese society was organized along the lines of feudalism, with military leaders holding vast tracts of land that were worked by peasants—a system that had died out in western Europe some 300 years earlier. The imperial court had become mainly a place of art and refinement, where the emperor reigned with pomp and pageantry but had little real influence. Powerful shoguns (a title that corresponds roughly to "highest general") controlled large areas that were administered by daimyo, or lords, and farmed by peasants.

In western Europe and America the invention of the steam engine had ushered in the industrial revolution. People had moved in droves from the farm to the factory; canals and railroads linked growing cities. But Japan's door was closed to nearly all foreigners and the changes they might bring. What trade was



This painting portrays United States Commodore Matthew C. Perry meeting with the Japanese imperial commissioners after his return in 1854 with warships and troops. Perry's return signaled the reopening of Japanese ports and the resumption of foreign trade.



permitted with the outside world was accomplished through the Dutch agents on the tiny island of Deshima in Nagasaki harbor who had been there since the 1630s (tolerated because they did not try to spread their Christian beliefs to the Japanese). A few modern improvements made their way to the imperial court, but for the most part the Japanese people continued to live as their ancestors had lived, farming and fishing, mostly in peasant villages and small towns.

Indeed, many Japanese barely knew that the rest of the world existed. Scholars managed to get around the ban on foreign literature, and they learned about the botany, medicine, military tactics, and mathematics of the day. Literacy was not widespread, however. Various reformers did bring improvements in irrigation and farming, though not many.

THE WANING OF THE SHOGUNATE

Japan's isolation delayed progress, but it also promoted a sense of national unity. While the rest of the world went through upheaval and change, the Japanese enjoyed a period of relative calm and, in the ruling classes, a certain luxury. The resurgence of Shinto during the period of isolation also brought renewed respect for the emperor, and the once-total authority of the powerful shogun began to lose its luster and gradually wane.

In this long period of domestic peace, the warrior class lost its true purpose. The daimyo and the samurai (a warrior class) turned to education and the arts. Among other things, they studied Shinto, learning about the sacred history of their islands and the divine origins of their emperor.

JAPAN OPENS ITS GATES

By the 1850s the outside world had changed dramatically. Steamships were circling the world. Firearms had revolutionized warfare. The invention of the power loom was the starting point for the age of factories. Japan, meanwhile, remained a living relic of feudalism, mired in its own past and turning away any foreign ship that wandered into its waters.

Perched on the edge of the Pacific Rim, an important socioeconomic region of countries surrounding the Pacific Ocean, Japan was ideally located for many reasons. Foreign ships on long sea journeys could stop there for provisions and fresh water. Whalers and fur traders could seek safe harbor from the typhoons that blew up unexpectedly in the Pacific. But Japan's isolationist policies forbade those typical "outsiders" from stopping on its shores. Indeed, sailors were met with outright hostility if their ships needed assistance in Japanese waters or if they were shipwrecked on Japanese land. Often those sailors were attacked or worse, killed, rather than assisted. As world trade grew and more and more ships sailed the Pacific, the situation became increasingly worse.

In 1853, when U.S. president Franklin Pierce initiated negotiations for trade with Japan, his goal was to make Japanese harbors accessible to ships from the United States. He sent Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan with orders to secure a trade relations treaty with the Japanese government.

TANKA

The tanka is an ancient Japanese poetic form. It has 31 syllables, divided into phrases of 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 syllables. Although often used by Buddhist and Zen poets, the tanka has distinctly Shinto origins. Tanka appear in the *Kojiki* and were part of the oral tradition before they were written down. According to legend the first tanka was composed by Susanowo, the storm deity. Emperor Meiji is said to have written 100,000 tanka, many in the classic style, with Shinto themes, celebrating the beauties of nature.

The morning sun
Rises so splendidly
Into the sky:
Oh, that we could attain
Such a clear reviving soul!
In the palace tower
Each and every window
Was opened widely
And then in four directions
We viewed the cherry in full bloom!

—Emperor Meiji (r. 1868–1912)

After several unsuccessful attempts to present the United States' demands to either the emperor or the shogun in power, Perry left, saying that he would return for their reply. In February 1854 Perry steamed into Tokyo harbor with nine warships and 1,600 troops. He carried a letter from the president asking that the ports be opened to foreign trade and that American sailors be given better treatment.

Many of the daimyo had planned to resist the American overtures, but Perry's display of might left no room whatsoever for

argument. The Japanese had no choice but to welcome Perry's delegation to their shores.

In the end the warlords yielded to the demands of the United States. Two ports were to be opened to limited trade, shipwrecked sailors would be well treated, and an American consul would be allowed to reside in Japan. Japan was open to the outside world for the first time in more than two centuries.

The concession to America further weakened the shogun's power. The more fiercely nationalistic of the warlords still felt that Japan should have resisted the United States' demands, while those who had complied defended their position. Political wrangling eventually led to the downfall of Tokugawa, the end of the shogunate in Japan, and the return of imperial rule.

THE MEIJI RESTORATION

In 1868 the 16-year-old Emperor Mutsuhito took the throne. He adopted the title Meiji and began his rule, like many emperors before him, as a figurehead. His actions as emperor, however, and the series of events surrounding his rise to power had vast implications for Shinto and the Japanese people.

For centuries Japan's emperors had been politically ineffective, with shoguns doing the actual ruling. Now, however, winds of change were sweeping across Japan. The shogun's power had eroded. As a reaction to new foreign influences entering Japan, Shinto, the native Japanese religion, was enjoying a resurgence. Western trade was expanding. Meiji and his advisers felt that the time was ripe for other changes as well. It was clear to them that they would have to make friends with the United States and Europe in order to acquire Western technology and become an equal player on the world stage. If not, they would risk being forever behind technologically and possibly falling under Western domination. Meiji and his advisers decided to cultivate the West deliberately as a strategy for becoming a world power. The young emperor took over the shogun's palace in Edo and renamed the city Tokyo, or "eastern capital," replacing Kyoto as the seat of government.



Portrait of the 122nd imperial ruler of Japan, Emperor Meiji (1852–1912), who established Shinto as the national religion of Japan in 1869.

The immediate goals of the new administration were to restore the authority of the imperial throne and to return Shinto to its rightful position as the national religion of Japan. Both goals would be served by Shinto worship, which emphasized the divine origins of the imperial line and promoted a sense of national pride and unity that had waned under Buddhism. Revival Shinto was to be the spiritual foundation for the "new Japan" that would emerge under Meiji.

THE CHARTER OATH

The young emperor Meiji almost immediately signed a document called the Imperial Charter Oath. Its articles called for the establishment of assemblies for public discussion of national policy; the inclusion of all classes in carrying out affairs of state; the opening of career paths to men from all social classes; an end to the "evil customs of the past"; and, most important, the strengthening of imperial rule. Japan's key to the future would be its ancient and honored customs and beliefs combined with modern knowledge.

Under the Meiji Restoration, as the movement came to be called, a parliamentary system of government replaced feudalism. For the first time people could choose where they would live. Occupations that had once been hereditary were opened to all. The shogun who had ruled from Edo was gone. In 1869 four powerful daimyo voluntarily turned over their holdings to the emperor. Other daimyo soon did the same. They were given pensions and allowed to retire. The samurai were released from service. Those able and educated men quickly found new outlets for their administrative talents. Many became businessmen; others went into politics.

At this time the government inaugurated trade and diplomatic relations with Europe and the United States. Education was made compulsory for all children, and military service was required of adult men. This was a period of intense social change and industrial growth in Japan, and the young emperor's power and prestige continued to soar.

Keeper of the Faith

The actions of Emperor Meiji revived "pure" Shinto, which stressed the emperor's divine right to rule and the ascendancy of the *kami* over the gods of other religions. Shinto was officially made the national religion. Under the new Charter Oath, the emperor was venerated by the people as a living *kami*.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE SHINTO

On April 25, 1869, Emperor Meiji, in his role as chief priest, appeared before Japan's leaders. He led Shinto ceremonies, addressing all the *kami,* and then read the newly issued Imperial Charter Oath, officially making it the law of the land. His



actions reestablished the age-old principle of the unity of Shinto worship and government.

The centuries-old alliance of Shinto and Buddhism ended. Shinto objects of worship were removed from Buddhist temples, Buddhist statues and art were removed from Shinto shrines, and the two religions were required to separate and set up independent places of worship. Originally the government's aim had been to suppress Buddhism, but Buddhism was too deeply entrenched in Japanese culture. Buddhism was not suppressed, but the two religions officially separated, taking over different shrines and temples and developing distinct identities. Ryobu, or double-aspect Shinto, the combination of Shinto and Buddhism, passed into history.

Prayers asking for blessings of the *kami* are written on strips of paper and hung in a Shinto temple. In larger shrines, there are booths selling prayers or fortune slips that can be left at the temple or taken back to be laid at a home altar.

SHINTO IN THE MEIJI ERA

Under the new charter a department of divinity was created. Its purpose was to advance the Shinto doctrine of the divine origins of the imperial line as a rationale for restoring the power of the emperor. Instead of achieving priesthood through heredity, priests were appointed by the government. Most of the Shinto priests who had inherited their positions were reappointed, but now they reported to a governmental agency that had the power to discipline or dismiss them.

SHINTO AS A STATE INSTITUTION

One of the effects of making Shinto a state institution was that people began to view Shinto and religion as two different things. The Shinto priesthood had no problem with performing rituals for the benefit of the nation, but they saw this as different from "religion," which they associated with worship, doctrine, rites such as funerals, and prayer. Japanese scholars began to debate whether Shinto was a religion.

The government declared Shinto to be nonreligious, but its observation was made a patriotic duty. Among other things, this fulfilled the constitutional promise of freedom of religion, while mandating Shinto. Shrines were declared national establishments for promoting community and morality, and they were supported by the state. Schools taught National Ethics, a blend of Shinto and Confucianism that included the celestial origins of the emperor and the sacred character of the Japanese nation and its people. Whole classes of schoolchildren were taken to the shrines to pay their respects to their country and their emperor.

EMPERORS AS LIVING *KAMI*

The government established new shrines that elevated emperors and members of the imperial family to the level of deities. Emperors were considered *kami* during their lifetime, until Emperor Hirohito renounced his divinity in January 1946, the year after World War II ended. Military heroes were also enshrined. It was considered a great honor to have died for Japan in battle. The Yas-

ukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which enshrined the war dead, became one of the country's most important shrines. The emperor himself conducted rituals there, and fallen soldiers were worshipped as *kami*. All of these things served to make Japan intensely nationalistic and played a role in the unification of its people during World War II.

SECT SHINTO—THE NEW RELIGIONS

Many people felt religiously adrift as Buddhism lost its influence and the state promoted "nonreligious" Shinto. A number of people turned to religious movements that had sprung up in the countryside, mostly among the ordinary people. Some of these "New Religions" traced their origins to pre-Meiji times, and others appeared both during and after the Meiji period. Although not literally new, they were new compared with the ancient traditions of Buddhism and Shinto. The Meiji government classified 13 sects of these New Religions as Sect Shinto and allowed them to continue their religious practices as separate from the Shinto mandated by the state.

Some of the New Religions had distinct Folk Shinto characteristics. Some had evolved from the mountain-worship cults, whose deities were thought to reside in great sacred mountains such as Mount Fuji. Others concentrated on stressing the importance of purification of water for body and mind. Several combined aspects of Revival Shinto and Confucianism, logically connecting State Shinto with the Confucian ideal of good government. Most, however, were basically Shinto.

TENRIKYO

There were also sects organized around a founder who gathered followers, usually after a divine revelation or ecstatic experience, and made faith healing a part of their

The Eight Mental Dusts

Tenrikyo doctrine teaches that wrong use of the mind causes illness, and purification of the mind relieves it. Nakayama identified the eight "mental dusts" that caused wrong use of the mind: miserliness, or stingy, ungenerous behavior; covetousness, or wanting what others have; hatred; self-love; enmity, or bitter feelings toward another; anger; greed; and arrogance.

SOKA GAKKAI

Like Shintoism, Buddhism also produced new religions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Soka Gakkai, one of the largest of the New Religions, was founded in the early 1900s, an offshoot of the Nichiren Buddhist tradition. Followers chant the Lotus Sutra scripture, believing that placing total faith in its strength will solve all worldly problems.

belief. Of these, the best known is Tenrikyo, "Teaching of the Heavenly Truth," or the religion of divine wisdom.

Tenrikyo was founded in 1838 by Nakayama Miki (1798–1887), a woman from a small village in central Japan. While attending a healing ceremony for her son, Nakayama had an ecstatic experience in which she was visited by a creator deity, God the Parent, the original parent of humanity. Nakayama became a "living *kami*." The deity, speaking through her, caused her to teach and preach about her experience, exhorting followers to remove the impurities from their lives and live joyously, helping others. Everything associated with Nakayama became *kami*. Her life is its sacred model, her writings its scripture.

Tenrikyo grew rapidly. Followers built dwellings near Nakayama's little village, and eventually it grew to become a city, Tenri, which includes Tenrikyo church headquarters, dormitories, schools, and a hospital.

KUROZUMIKYO

Another of the older New Religions, Kurozumikyo, was founded at the end of the Tokugawa era by Kurozumi Munetada, a hereditary Shinto priest of the samurai class.

Kurozumi, a devout worshipper of the Shinto sun goddess, Amaterasu, received a revelation in which the sun seemed to enter his body through his mouth, uniting him with the divinity. Kurozumi was himself a healer, and people began coming to him for help and guidance. He vowed to teach ordinary people enlightenment and to spread the way to others. The cornerstone of his doctrine was daily worship of the sun and the recitation of the Great Purification Prayer. Kurozumi developed an organization that included disciples who won converts to him and his doctrine. The sect was officially recognized by the Meiji government in 1876.

The popularity and growth of the sects during Meiji times reflected the needs of the populace for a belief system. The sects differed from State Shinto in that they were "religious" in character; and from classic Shinto in that they introduced elements of Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, folk belief, and even Christianity; yet most were recognizably Shinto. The sects of Sect Shinto mainly rejected shrine worship, instead building assembly halls that were called churches, not shrines.

THE RISE OF MILITARISM

The Japanese had always been a proud people. Their failure as a nation of warriors to drive off Commodore Perry and the Americans in their modern ships in 1854 continued to bother the Japanese military and the extreme nationalists. They used Shinto as a rationale to persuade the emperor that Japan's empire should be expanded in Asia. Was he not the grandson of the gods? Did he not, then, have a divine right to rule over a wider domain than the Japanese islands?

Japan had a long military tradition. It soon became a formidable military machine. It looked first at the other countries of Asia. In 1895 Japanese forces attacked China, which had been weakened by civil war, and won. As a result China conceeded to Japan Port Arthur, an important seaport on the Liaotung Peninsula off western Korea in the Yellow Sea. But Russia, Germany, and France demanded that Japan give the land back, and Japan yielded. Three years later Russia seized Manchuria, a part of China just across the Russian border. Manchuria included the same territory that Japan had earlier won and returned, and Russia's act infuriated the Japanese. This time it was Japan that demanded that the land be returned to China. Russia was slow to respond, and in 1905 Japan attacked the Russian navy at Port Arthur. Japan won, becoming the first Asian country to defeat a European power. Its accomplishment was all the more impressive because the ships and firearms it used had been built in Japan, which had, in one short generation, gone from feudalism to industrial power. In 1910 Japan invaded and took over Korea.

Emperor Meiji's Tanka for Peace

Emperor Hirohito of Japan (1926–89) recited a tanka, an ancient Japanese poetic form, written by Emperor Meiji as he signed Japan's declaration of war against the United States. When the declaration of war was presented to him the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) in the Hawaiian Islands had already taken place.

It is our hope
That all the world's oceans
Be joined in peace,
So why do the winds and waves
Now rise up in angry rage?

—Emperor Meiji (r. 1868–1912)

JAPAN IN WORLD WAR I

In 1914, at the start of World War I, Japan, as an ally of Great Britain, declared war on Germany. Japan attacked German holdings on the Shantung Peninsula in China and quickly took control of them. It also gained control of the German-owned islands in the Pacific—the Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall islands. At the close of the war Japan applied to the League of Nations for permanent rights to those Pacific islands formerly held by Germany, and it succeeded. It also received special rights in Shantung.

Japan thus emerged from the war as one of the "Big Five" world powers. It spent the next 20 years in a period of industrial growth and social change. Japan had benefited from the war not just politically, but economically. Books and newspapers flooded the country, and with their newfound universal education, the Japanese devoured them.

Military power continued to increase. Boys began military training at 14. Many were from peasant backgrounds and saw the army as a step up in their lives. They had a better life as soldiers than as laborers, and they were given respect. In military service to the emperor, direct descendant of the sun goddess, these young men had a divine mission. To die for Japan would be an honor.

WORLD WAR II

In the 1930s a worldwide depression caused widespread suffering. In Japan people in the countryside were starving. Desperate parents sold their children for small sums in the hope that the children would find a better life with someone else. Japan's economic woes crippled the civil government, which seemed powerless to help.



A portrait of Hirohito after being crowned emperor of Japan in 1928. Emperors were considered *kami* during their lifetime, but after the Japanese defeat in World War II Emperor Hirohito renounced his divinity.

Defender of the Faith

As a rationale for Japan's expansion In the 1930s, military leaders quoted the legendary emperor Jimmu Tenno: "The imperial rule shall be extended to all the cardinal points and the whole world shall be brought under one roof." (In H. Byron Earhart, *Religions of Japan*.) They claimed that because the emperor had received his power directly from Amaterasu, the sun goddess, he was the only rightful ruler on earth.

The Japanese military, always strong, seized even greater power. Many soldiers came from rural backgrounds, and they felt the suffering of the farmers and peasants keenly. Within the army resentment of the civilian government grew. With military leaders holding most of the positions of power in the government, they began a campaign to bring the whole world under the rule of the emperor. As a result Japan began an unyielding march across Asia.

In 1931 Japan seized Chinese Manchuria, with its rich iron and steel industries, and forced the people there to produce steel for the empire. In 1937, at a time when China was weakened by civil war, Japan invaded northern China. China resisted with help from the British and the United States, and Japan's attack ended in a standoff.

WAR IN EUROPE

By then war had broken out in Europe. After the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, Britain was forced to declare war on Poland. This was followed by Germany's invasion of Belgium and France. Belgium collapsed and France was defeated in 1940. After the invasion of France, Germany proceeded to attack Denmark, Holland, and Norway, who all fell to Germany in 1940. By mid-1941 Germany had invaded Greece, Yugoslavia, and Crete, and by July 1941 the Russians were also at war, following the invasion of Russian territory by Germany.

Suicidal

Kamikazes means "winds of the gods" and was the name given to Japanese pilots who were willing to commit suicide during missions to attack the enemy.

In the later part of 1941 Hitler had declared Germany to be an ally of Japan. Many Japanese believed that Germany would be the winner in this world war. In 1941 the Japanese Imperial Council secretly voted to go to war against the United



States because the United States had made it clear they were not prepared to tolerate Japanese aggression in the Pacific.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands, a U.S. territory lying in the North Pacific Ocean, thus bringing the United States into World War II. For Japan this proved to be a great tactical error. The United States responded fiercely. Over the next three years all of Japan's ports were destroyed, along with three-quarters of its naval fleet, and

The Peace Park monument in Hiroshima commemorates those who died after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the city on August 6, 1945. Three days later a bomb was dropped on Nagasaki leading to Japanese surrender.

90 of its major cities were firebombed. Half of all its industry was damaged beyond repair. The Japanese people, taught from birth that their emperor was descended from the gods and that death in the service of the emperor would bring them the status of *kami,* fought on in the face of ever-lengthening odds. Japanese kamikaze pilots by the hundreds flew their bomb-laden airplanes directly into their targets and died in the crash.

Excerpt from Emperor Hirohito's Address to the Japanese People, January 1, 1946

…we know that the spirit of love of home and the spirit of love of country are especially strong in our nation. Now in truth is the time for expanding this and for putting forth sacrificial efforts for the consummation of the love of mankind. When we reflect on the results of the long-continued war which has ended in our defeat, we fear that there is danger that our people find the situation hard to bear and that they sink to the depths of discouragement. As the winds of adversity gradually heighten, there is peril in the weakening of moral principles and the marked confusion of thought that they bring.

We stand together with you our countrymen. Our gains and losses have ever been one. We desire that our woe and weal should be shared. The bonds between us and our countrymen have been tied together from first to last by mutual trust and affection. They do not originate in mere myth and legend. They do not have their basis in the fictitious ideas that the emperor is manifest god and that the Japanese people are a race superior to other races and therefore destined to rule the world…

THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE

At the Potsdam Conference held in Germany in July 1945, the United States, Great Britain, and China demanded unconditional surrender by the Japanese or they would suffer "prompt and utter destruction." When the Japanese did not respond, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945; three days later a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 10 Emperor Hirohito broke a deadlock in the Imperial Council by agreeing to surrender, and on August 14 the Allies received word from Japan that it would accept the terms of the Potsdam Conference.

SHINTO IN POSTWAR JAPAN

In the aftermath of the war the Japanese adopted a new constitution, giving power to the people of Japan and making the emperor a constitutional monarch and the "Symbol of the State." Japan gave up its right to use force to settle international disputes and to raise a military force.

The new constitution guaranteed freedom of religion. Government support for Shinto or any other religion was outlawed. Shinto would survive as the principal religion of the Japanese people, but it would never again be state mandated or supported. In an address to the people on New Year's Day 1946, Emperor Hirohito renounced forever any claim to divinity.

No longer a state religion, Shinto regrouped. Many shrines came together to form an organization called the Association of Shinto Shrines. This organization coordinates most of the activities of the more than 81,000 Shinto shrines in Japan.

The emperor still acts as chief priest of Imperial Shinto today, carrying on worship at the three shrines inside the palace. The ancient rites of Imperial Shinto ask the blessing of the *kami* on the land and its people. The imperial line also maintains a special relationship with the shrine at Ise, which is devoted to the goddess Amaterasu, the legendary ancestor of the emperor.

CHAPTER 6

SHINTO BELIEF AND RITUAL



Shinto is often described as a happy religion. It assumes a basic goodness in people and in the universe. Its believers express their religion joyously in festivals that bring people together for worship and celebration. Shinto stresses worldly virtues such as gratitude, sincerity, cooperation, and harmony with other people and with nature. Shinto virtues flow throughout every level of Japanese life, from the home to the workplace, and are the bedrock of the culture.

SHINTO BELIEF

Shinto has no catechism, no sacred book to study, and no written commandments or specific moral code to learn. People are simply expected to try to live in accordance with the will of the *kami*. Because all Japanese people believe they are distantly descended from the heavenly *kami,* they also believe that the knowledge of what is right and good can be found within their own hearts. This does not mean that there will never be trouble in life or that people will never act in ways that cause pain to others, but it is felt that those people are misguided rather than sinful or evil.

Two women offering prayers at a Shinto shrine in Kyoto. Individual worship is central to Shinto and from an early age people learn to express their gratitude to the *kami* through prayer and ritual.



SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL PURITY

Shinto encourages simplicity and cleanliness as signs of inner goodness. There is a steady emphasis on spiritual and physical purity. Shinto asks its followers to be pure in heart and mind and to be grateful for the many blessings bestowed on them by the *kami*. How they fulfill those obligations is left to the conscience of the individual. Expectations for living the way of the *kami* are transmitted by example and through tales and legends, early history, and the *norito,* or ancient Shinto prayers.

From Shinto mythology people learn that the *kami* can act unpredictably and are prone to all-too-human failings such as jealousy, rage, annoyance, vanity, and thoughtlessness. The story of the storm god Susanowo and his sister, the sun goddess Amaterasu, for example, teaches many lessons. The conflict portrays the deities at their worst—Susanowo betraying his word and causing trouble, Amaterasu sulking in the heavenly cave. But Susanowo's rampage through the heavenly fields is understood as mischievous, not malicious. In the end he redeems himself by casting the symbols of his troublemaking into the sea and doing good on earth, by using his cleverness to kill the eight-headed serpent, and by making amends with Amaterasu by giving her the jeweled sword found inside the serpent's belly. Uzume, the mirth goddess who brings Amaterasu out of her cave with her humorous dance, demonstrates the value of laughter to the world.

BLESSINGS OF THE *KAMI*

The purpose of Shinto worship is to maintain close harmony among people, nature, and the *kami*. The *kami* embody the life force and can bring blessings to humans, yet they may act in unpredictable ways, disrupting the natural order, as when Amaterasu darkened the world by withdrawing to the cave. People remind the *kami* of human presence by continually venerating and thanking them for the beauty and bounty of nature and for health and prosperity.

Shinto followers focus on life on this earth, to which they give the highest value and greatest importance. The *kami* are the

spiritual forces that inspire the world, giving it life and protecting from harm those who live in it.

INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

In Shinto individual worship is more important than doctrine or belief, and people learn from birth the habit of gratitude to the *kami*. There are no regular services as such. Rather, people observe Shinto practices as they feel the need. Some limit their participation to annual festivals; others stop at their local shrine every day or perform simple rites before their *kamidana,* or home altar. Those rites may consist only of freshening the arrangement of gifts on the altar and pausing for a few seconds to bow with clasped hands.

Before they make a formal visit to a shrine, Shinto worshippers customarily follow simple rituals to prepare themselves for worship. Because cleanliness, which symbolizes purity, is a Shinto virtue, many people bathe and put on clean clothes in anticipation of worship and also wash their hands and cleanse their mouths when they arrive at a temple. Worshippers then approach their shrine through the *torii,* or ritual gate. A path runs from the gate to the shrine itself, and along the path is running water in some form—either a natural spring or pond or a fountain—with a stone basin that worshippers use for ritual purification.



A stone basin with clean water for worshippers to purify themselves before entering a Shinto shrine.

It is customary but not essential to leave a small offering of money or food, such as a few coins or a few grains of rice wrapped in paper, a rice cake, or a little sake (Japanese rice wine), for the *kami*. Worshippers may write prayer requests on slips of white paper and attach them to the sacred sakaki tree that is usually nearby. If the shrine is a large one, there may be a booth on the grounds where people may buy prayer or wooden fortune boards, which they may either leave behind or take back to their *kamidana,* if they have one. The offerings

Summoning the *Kami*

Shinto worship takes place outside the shrine, not within. To get the attention of the *kami* within the shrine, the worshipper bows low twice and then rings a shrine bell and claps twice. The *kami* having been summoned, the worshipper bows again and offers a prayer, either asking for the blessing of the resident *kami* or thanking them for their goodness.

SHINTO CLERICAL TITLES

***saishu*—**Highest-ranking priest or priestess at the Grand Shrine, Ise.

***guji*—**The chief priest; responsible for all administrative and ceremonial functions at a shrine or shrines.

***kannushi*—**General term for members of the priesthood; one with chief responsibility for a shrine.

***negi*—**Senior priest; directly subordinate to *guji.*

***hafuri,* or *hafuribe*—** Originally the term for the person responsible for liturgy; next in rank to *negi.* Also a general term for priest.

***tayu*—**A general term for those serving at Ise.

***jinin*—**Lower-ranking clergy with shrine duties.

***toya*—**Lower-ranking or part-time priest; lay position with ceremonial duties.

***miko*—**Female attendants at shrines; usually sacred dancers.

made to the *kami* are tokens of appreciation, not sacrifices. Sacrifice is unknown in Shinto. People approach the *kami* with pure hearts, and they leave satisfied that their prayer has been heard.

RITUAL IN SHINTO WORSHIP

Having no creed or scripture, Shinto relies greatly on ritual to transmit religious thought and feeling. The *kami* are believed to appreciate and respond to ritual, and correctly performing ritual is an important way to communicate with them.

Apart from the simple rituals performed by individuals, Shinto ritual is conducted by priests who have studied its ancient forms. All ceremonies contain four elements: purification, offering, supplication, and feast.

HARAI

Purification, or *harai,* removes the pollution, unrighteousness, and evil that keep worshippers from being able to communicate with the *kami*. The symbolic rinsing of hands and mouth before proceeding to a shrine is a simple purification ritual for individuals. Performed by a priest, it includes a prayer, the waving of a purification wand, and often the sprinkling of salt or salt water, which has purifying powers.

SHINSHEN

Offerings, or *shinshen,* are simple gifts made to the *kami* on a regular basis, ideally at least once a day. Shinto followers believe

that if this duty to the *kami* is neglected, the *kami* will be unhappy and will fail to provide their continued support and blessings. In homes and at small shrines offerings may be a few coins, bits of food, or flowers. At larger shrines offerings are presented according to the ritual of the shrine, often after priests have purified them. Food and drink—particularly rice and sake, but also water and other food, such as fish and vegetables—are frequent offerings. Other gifts may include silk or cotton cloth, money, jewelry, and perhaps the product of an industry. Sacred dances, sports, and drama, which entertain the *kami,* are also forms of offering.

Led by Shinto priests, visitors to the shrine at Sanno in Tokyo walk through a large ring of reeds during the purification ceremony. It is believed the unique purification rites will bring good health and luck to its participants.



NORITO

The classic prayers, or *norito,* of Shinto are spoken in ancient Japanese, which modern speakers no longer understand. The prayers were composed in antiquity in rhythmic poetry that was believed to be pleasing to the ear of the *kami.* A *norito* must be pronounced exactly as it was composed or it loses its effectiveness in reaching the *kami.* Newer prayers are drafted by the Association of Shinto Shrines for use in its shrines, and prayers may be composed by priests as well. In general the prayers begin with praise of the *kami,* refer to the origin of the ritual being performed, offer thanks, make appropriate requests, and end with words of respect for the *kami's* powers. All formal Shinto ceremonies end with a symbolic feast, or *naorai,* which means "to eat with the *kami.*" At the close of the ceremony worshippers are offered a sip of sake or water; during festivals people may adjourn to enjoy a festive meal.

ORIGINS OF THE SHINTO PRIESTHOOD

Originally the priestly duties of Shinto were carried out by clan leaders. But as the clans combined and recombined into larger and larger units, several families began to dominate and a priestly class emerged. The priesthood became hereditary. The priestly families traced their ancestry back to the *kami* who accompanied Amaterasu's grandson, Ninigi, from the high plains of heaven on his mission to rule the earth.

The early imperial court granted authority to four families. One was in charge of rituals and ceremonies. A second was charged with remaining ritually pure and keeping in constant contact with the *kami.* A third was responsible for learning the will of the *kami,* and the members of the fourth family were the dancers and musicians. A few ceremonies were performed by the emperor alone, but for the most part those four families were in charge of all Shinto rites. Shinto priests were not required to be celibate. Prayers and rituals were passed down from father to son, generation to generation.

The establishment of State Shinto in the 1800s changed the makeup of the priesthood. Hereditary positions were abolished

and priests were appointed by the government. In practice many of the priests under the hereditary system were reappointed by local officials, but at important shrines in the cities the positions were given to well-connected people of high social standing.

THE MODERN PRIESTHOOD

Today Shinto priests are private citizens. Except for those who administer large shrines, many work at other jobs. They can be teachers, office workers, or businesspeople. They marry and live with their families, occasionally in houses on shrine grounds but often in the community. Unless they are conducting ritual at a shrine, they dress in ordinary street clothes.

The priest's job is to know Shinto ritual and liturgy and how to conduct Shinto festivals and ceremonies. People study to be priests, either privately with another priest, by attending classes sponsored by the Association of Shinto Shrines, or by taking courses at a seminary or university. Trained candidates are appointed by the Association of Shinto Shrines.

Before a festival the priests who will conduct the ceremony seclude themselves to prepare themselves spiritually. They bathe, put on clean clothes, eat only certain foods—for example, they are forbidden to eat meat—and concentrate on leading a calm and controlled life. Any violation of the rules of abstinence disqualifies them from participating in the ceremonies.

WOMEN PRIESTS

Although the Shinto priesthood is traditionally male, there has never been a rule

SHINTO CEREMONIAL DRESS

Shinto priests wear clothes modeled after court dress of the late Heian period (858–1158 C.E.). The priests' attire consists of a kimono made of uncut squares of cloth, a formal divided skirt, an outer robe, a hat, and shoes. Usually the kimono is white, symbolizing purity. The skirt and outer robe may also be white, or they may be in a color that in ancient times signified the rank of the wearer. Hats, also from Heian times, may be simple or elaborate. All priests wear white *tabi,* or socks, inside the shrine. Outside, shoes for ceremonial wear are special black-lacquered sandals made from a single piece of hollowed wood, although lower-ranking priests may wear ordinary white ones. The priest carries a symbol of the priestly office, a tapering wooden slab that may be placed under the belt.

Shrine maidens similarly wear attire from the Heian period. Their outfit is a white kimono and a red divided skirt. For ceremonial dances their hair hangs down the back and is tied with a red ribbon. They too wear *tabi,* covered outdoors by sandals with white thongs.

Shinto priests and temple members from the local community performing an offering ritual during a ceremony at their shrine.

against women priests. At those times when the ruler of Japan was an empress, the role of head priest passed to her. The shrine to the sun goddess Amaterasu at Ise, considered the most sacred of all Shinto shrines, traditionally has a high priestess, usually a member of the imperial family, in addition to a high priest. During World War II, when most Japanese men were engaged in the



war effort, their wives and daughters took over priestly duties. Many women proved to be able administrators of large shrines. After the war's end in 1945 the newly formed Association of Shinto Shrines recognized the women's service to the Shinto religion and welcomed their participation. Equality of men and women in the Shinto priesthood continues today.



SHRINE MAIDENS

In addition to a staff of priests, many larger shrines also have *miko,* or shrine maidens, who participate in Shinto ceremonies. *Miko* are young, unmarried women, the daughters of priests or local shrine members, who learn the sacred dances and perform them as a part of Shinto ritual. The *miko* wear a traditional costume of white kimono and red divided skirt. In addition to ceremonial dance, *miko* may perform other parts of the ritual, such as distributing the symbolic feast to the people after the ceremony or selling talismans and charms on shrine grounds.

Like other celebrants of Shinto, *miko* otherwise lead ordinary lives, attending school and living in the community. When they marry, other girls and young women take their place.

THE SHINTO CEREMONY

Before a Shinto ceremony the priests and musicians gather, along with the local dignitaries and their representatives who will also participate. They go in procession to the place of purification. After purification they proceed to the inner sanctuary of the shrine. All bow deeply. As music plays and

the other participants remain in a position of deep reverence, the chief priest opens the doors of the inner sanctuary. He chants a special "*ooo*-ing" sound that attracts the *kami*. The priests then make offerings of food and any other gifts. After each offering there is a prayer, and a priest or other specially trained person performs a sacred dance.

The worshippers then go one by one to make a symbolic offering, usually a sprig of the sacred sakaki tree, placing it on a special stand, clapping and bowing in the traditional Shinto way. In a large festival one representative is chosen to make the offering for all, who clap and bow in unison. After all offerings have been made the worshippers bow deeply again, and the priest removes the offerings and closes the door to the sanctuary, again with special chanting. The priests and other participants withdraw to partake of the symbolic feast. The worshippers receive a sip of wine or water. Food offerings may later be shared with the members of the shrine.

PURIFICATION RITUAL

A typical purification ritual is *yutate,* or immersion in hot water. The priests heat two cauldrons of water over a fire. When the water is hot they put out the fire. Then the head priest takes a branch of the sacred sakaki tree to which strips of white paper, symbolizing the *kami,* are attached and waves it over the head of the other priests, the shrine maidens, and the officials and patrons of the shrine, usually local businesspeople. The priest speaks a *norito.* Then the shrine maidens do a sacred dance. Finally one maiden, dressed in white, tosses salt onto the ground around the cauldrons to purify it and adds small amounts of rice and sake to the cauldrons in a ritual manner. She then takes a wooden bowl and scoop and, from the air above, scoops

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP

Regular individual worship and proper ritual are vital parts of Shinto. Through these forms people express their gratitude to the *kami,* the life force behind all things in creation. This expression of gratitude maintains the balance among humans, the natural world, and *kami.* The relationship is reciprocal; having been thanked and revered, the *kami* return the favor by continuing to provide blessings to the people. Thus worship of the *kami* gives people access to their life-giving powers.

nectar of the *kami* and pours it into the cauldrons. Next she fills the bowl from a cauldron and gives it to a priest, who carries it into the shrine to the altar, thus making it sacred.

The shrine maiden then stirs the sacred water with leafy bamboo branches and waves the branches over the people, sprinkling them lightly with drops of warm water as she speaks special words. The water from the cauldrons is then passed around for all to drink, uniting them with the *kami*.

The purification ritual incorporates the basic Shinto values of purification, renewal, gratitude, and respect for the *kami*. It also shares the powers of the *kami* with the people and creates a heightened sense of community and cooperation. As always its aim is to maintain a harmonious relationship between the *kami* and the people.

CHAPTER 7

THE SHINTO YEAR: FESTIVALS AND RITES OF PASSAGE



Shinto is a religion of festivals and celebration. Each shrine has its own yearly calendar of rituals and festivals, and each calendar can vary from shrine to shrine. The festivals of the Shinto calendar often overlap with the religious holidays of other traditions, and all are part of the annual events, or *nenju gyoji,* of Japan. These include both religious festivals and regional and national celebrations. Although today many Shinto festivals, or *matsuri,* seem more secular than religious, most began as religious celebrations, and the word *matsuri* connotes prayer and worship along with festival and fun.

Shinto began in a farming society, and its festivals follow the agricultural calendar. Spring festivals mark the time of rice planting, a critical time in rice culture. In the fall there are festivals to commemorate harvest and thanksgiving. The new year is celebrated as a time of purification and renewal and is very important because it symbolizes a new start. But festivals also celebrate

During a *matsuri* procession in the Gion district of Kyoto, crowds of people surround a *mikoshi,* a decorated box containing a *shintai,* a sacred object symbolizing the essence of the *kami.*


盛夏百貨大廉売
週刊新潮

smaller wonders: cherry blossoms in the spring, the blooms of summer, and the changing of leaves in the fall.

Occupations have guardian deities, and yearly festivals are held to thank them for their protection. In addition, apart from the yearly activities that occur at all Shinto shrines, each shrine celebrates a festival for its own particular guardian deity or deities.

SHINTO FESTIVALS

Festivals are, first of all, times to enjoy. When festival days arrive, businesses, educational establishments, and factories shut down, and families, friends, and neighbors get together, frequently on the spacious grounds surrounding a shrine. The larger shrines often have outbuildings in which people can gather for entertainment. Actors may present Noh, classic dance-dramas that depict stories of the *kami*, plays about early Shinto history, or comedies, because the *kami* love to laugh. Shrine maidens perform dances to entertain the *kami*. Merchants set up stalls on shrine grounds to sell snacks, drinks, souvenirs, and games.

Festivals may last one day or as long as a week. They may include jugglers, wrestlers, horse races, archery, bonfires, boat races; some of the larger festivals involve the entire population, even in major cities like Kyoto.

Within every shrine is a *shintai*—a sacred object symbolizing the essence of the *kami* to whom the shrine is dedicated. This sacred object is wrapped in silk and enclosed in a box that is never opened. The *shintai* is never seen, even by the priests, and worshippers take its existence on faith. At festival time priests place this box in a *mikoshi,* or palanquin, a decorated chest carried by means of long, horizontal poles. Strong young men carry this palanquin around the town so the *kami* can see the locale over which they preside and

RICE CULTURE

Rice, the food that has sustained the Japanese since prehistory, is planted by broadcasting the grains freely in a small field and flooding the area with water. Three or four weeks later the young seedlings are transplanted into carefully spaced rows about 18 inches apart in a larger walled field, which is then also flooded. Transplanting is a critical stage in rice culture; if the grain fails to sprout it can be replanted, but if transplantation fails the crop is lost. Shinto festivals to ensure the success of the rice crop are therefore held not at planting time, but at the time the rice is transplanted.

bless it or simply enjoy it. The men make sure that the *mikoshi* passes each house in the town so that the relationship between the *kami* and the people is reinforced. Important, too, is the fact that the very act of carrying the *mikoshi* requires close cooperation among the men. A small palanquin may require four to eight bearers; some of the larger ones may require 30. The shared task reminds the men of their dependence on one another, a traditional Shinto virtue.

At larger festivals processions may also include huge wheeled floats, sometimes two stories high, colorfully decorated, and pulled by young men. The floats may present historical scenes or may carry dancers and musicians who perform for the crowds. People join the processions dressed in historical costumes—traditional kimonos and court dress or the regalia of ancient warriors.

Shinto ritual, of course, is an important part of every festival. Priests perform ancient rituals of purification, offering, supplication, and feast. Colorfully dressed shrine maidens dance for the entertainment of the *kami*. Prayers ask for a continuation of the blessings of the *kami*. Throughout the festival worshippers approach the shrine, ring the shrine bell, clap, and present their own offerings and prayers to the *kami*.

THE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

The New Year Festival, which lasts for seven days, is the country's most important Shinto celebration. It is both a national holiday and a religious event—a time to celebrate, pay debts, make amends, and begin anew. During this festival people dress in kimonos, and women do their hair in traditional styles. The streets are festooned with banners and other colorful decorations.

Before the New Year Festival begins people clean their homes, symbolically sweeping out the old year, with its bad luck and sorrow, and making room for the new. Around the house they hang pine branches, which symbolize renewal of life, and rice-straw ropes, which define sacred space and ward off evil. It is also customary to put pine boughs in bamboo baskets because in Japan

bamboo is a symbol of strength and growth. Some people set up a special altar in their homes to welcome ancestors and rice *kami,* who return in January.

VISITING THE SHRINE

For a Shinto family one of the first acts of the new year is to visit the local shrine. Beginning at midnight on New Year's Eve, worshippers approach the shrine to pay respects and to ask the *kami* for help in the coming year. Outside the shrine may be hung a rice-straw rope through which the people pass before they enter the shrine precincts, symbolically leaving their impurities behind so that they may be fresh and pure when they meet the *kami.* Inside they toss coins into a box as a symbolic offering, then offer their prayers. Often they make resolutions for the new year and request assistance in keeping them. This visit to the shrine is an act of purification, the shedding of old impurities and the beginning of a new life.

The New Year Festival includes the formal Shinto ritual in which priests chant *norito,* or ancient Shinto prayers. Shrine maidens, the young girls whose families are members of the shrine, wear traditional costumes and dance *kagura,* or sacred dances, to entertain the *kami.* Shrine maidens also participate in some of the rituals and help in the business of the shrine, selling talismans (old charms) and giving blessings. New Year Festival rites help people begin the new year pure in heart and in contact with *kami.*

During these festivities it is customary for businesses and other organizations to make substantial gifts to the local shrine, thanking the *kami* for their support in the past and asking for success in the future. Gifts may be related to the contributor's business but are more commonly food and sake. Sake is a popular gift. After it has been consecrated, it is shared by the worshippers, adding to the festival atmosphere.

On the first night of the New Year people may celebrate all night. At the smaller countryside shrines worshippers drift away by one o'clock in the morning. But many leave to board trains

NEW YEAR CHARMS

At New Year, Shinto visitors may buy new charms to place on their altar. A popular charm takes the shape of an arrow, a Shinto symbol that carries the meaning of destroying evil. They may also purchase *ema,* wooden votive tablets, on which to write their requests, and fortune slips on white paper, which they read and then tie to temple trees. In this way the whole community shares any good luck included in the fortune, while any bad luck may blow away.



A stand selling *ema,* wooden votive tablets, on which requests to the *kami* are written. These are purchased by visitors to the shrine and hung in the temple grounds.

that run through the night to nearby national shrines. Major shrines, such as the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo and Fushimi Inari in Kyoto, boast huge crowds of more than a million people on New Year's night.

After the first night the celebration becomes quieter, but people continue to gather in a holiday mood. Extended families get together at this time, and spirits of ancestors are believed to visit as well, so the celebrations include both living members and ancestor spirits. They give *oseibo,* or year-end gifts, a custom adopted from Europe and America.

LITTLE NEW YEAR

The talismans, bought during the past year and left at the local shrine during the New Year Festival, become part of the next Shinto ceremony. On January 15, or Little New Year, priests ritually destroy the old charms by burning them while chanting ancient Shinto prayers. The fire eradicates the bad luck absorbed by the charms over the year, reinforcing the renewal of the new year. This ritual also welcomes the rice *kami* back for another year of prosperity.

THE GREAT PURIFICATION

Purification is an essential part of all Shinto worship, and the New Year Festival includes the Shinto rite known as the Great Purification. This rite removes the impurities people have accumulated since the last purification ritual.

The Great Purification ritual symbolically re-creates Izanagi's act of bathing when he returned from his trip to Yomi, the underworld. As he purified himself he brought forth new *kami,* including Susano-wo and Amaterasu. Thus purification has power over death, and living people may return to a state of purity. Purification brings people closer to the *kami.*

Chanting

The *Oharai* is a song in praise of life, spoken in the ancient Yamato language from which modern Japanese comes. Shinto followers believe that each word has its own soul, and when the words of a *norito* are chanted together as they have been chanted since the time of the *kami,* they unite people with the *kami.*

SUMO WRESTLING—ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE *KAMI*

Sumo wrestling, a Japanese sporting activity, began as entertainment for the *kami*. Originally held at Shinto shrines during festivals, sumo matches now take place in arenas. They are associated with many rituals and customs. A canopy draped above the arena ring represents the shrine roof. The rules of sumo are simple. A wrestler who touches the clay with any part of his body but the soles of his feet, or who moves any part of his body outside the ring, loses. Before entering the ring, the wrestlers perform a simple purification rite by washing their hands and mouth, as they would if visiting a shrine. They clap their hands to attract the *kami,* then extend their arms and turn their palms up to show that they are not carrying weapons. They stamp their feet vigorously to drive evil spirits into the ground, away from the ring, and sprinkle salt on the ground to purify it. In the intervals between rounds, the sumo wrestlers again stamp and clap.



The wrestler's dress is the *mewashi,* or loincloth, and his hair is tied into a topknot to cushion his head during a fall. Sumo wrestling is very popular in Japan, where it is considered the national sport.

NENJU GYOJI: THE NATIONAL EVENTS

In Japan there are national holidays or major festivals almost every month, featuring parades, parties, games, and dressing up in traditional clothes. The New Year Festival is the biggest, but there are many other occasions for celebration.

Beginning of Spring

February 3 is celebrated as the last day of winter and the beginning of spring. People throw soybeans out of their houses and symbolically drive out evil and impurity. Children gather soybeans that are tossed out of the shrines by the shrine attendants and bring them home for luck.

Spring Equinox

On a day close to the spring equinox, around March 21, local shrines conduct a spring festival during which people visit the shrines to make offerings to the *kami,* a reminder of the seasonal rhythms and the links between humans, the *kami,* and nature.

Flower Festival

Early April brings a flower festival. This was traditionally the time when the mountain *kami* came down from the hills and entered the rice fields to be rice *kami* for the rest of the season. In celebration, people climbed the mountains and carried down armloads of flowers, signifying the coming of spring and the bounty of nature. Today people picnic and hike in the mountains to celebrate the festival.

Festival of the Dead

After the Great Purification in June comes the Festival of the Dead in July. Originally a Buddhist festival, this event is now commemorated by all. Homes are cleaned and ancestors are welcomed with special offerings. Families visit cemeteries and decorate memorial stones with flowers.

Fall Festival

Close to the fall equinox in mid-September is a fall festival, a kind of Thanksgiving that marks the return of the rice *kami* to the mountains for another year and thanks them for the rice harvest. People again visit graves to honor ancestors and receive their blessing.

Preparation for the New Year

In December comes the preparation for the New Year Festival, and the ritual year begins again.

The Great Purification takes place at all local shrines twice a year, during the New Year Festival and at the end of June or the beginning of July. A priest recites the *Oharai,* or Great Purification *norito,* and then waves a purification wand in a ritual pattern before the assembled worshippers.

Listeners to the *Oharai* are exhorted to feel the rhythm and spirit of the prayer, which is directed at washing away impurities in themselves and in the nation as a whole. During the Great Purification, people may rub a human figure cut from paper over their bodies, symbolically rubbing away impurity. The paper, like the talismans at the New Year Festival, is later ritually destroyed by the priests, ridding the people of anything impure.

RITES OF PASSAGE

Shinto, like all religions, marks times in human life: birth, marriage, and death. It places great emphasis on beginnings, fertility, and growth, so birth and childhood are much celebrated in Shinto families with special events for children.

MIYAMAIRI

At birth children receive their souls from their birth *kami,* the guardian of the place where they were born. When babies are one month old and free from the impurities associated with birth, their parents take them to their local shrine for *miyamairi,* a birth ritual. At that time a baby becomes *ujiko,* a parishioner of that shrine, and comes under the protection of the shrine's guardian *kami.* Traditionally this is the baby's first trip outside of his or her home. By taking their baby to the shrine, parents accept for their child the responsibility of supporting the shrine and participating in festivals and Shinto ritual. The birth ritual affirms that the *kami* are the source of the child's life and establishes a relationship between the child and the *kami.*

BOYS' AND GIRLS' FESTIVALS

Many other celebrations with Shinto roots mark the life of a child. Boys and girls have their own festivals. Girls may partici-

Shichigosan

The annual Shichigosan, or seven-five-three, is a day of prayer for the welfare of children. Widely celebrated, it takes place in November. Girls of three and seven and boys of five are dressed in their best clothes or in traditional costumes and taken for a visit to their tutelary shrine. There they pray to the *kami* to protect them and help them to grow and be pure and strong.

pate in the Doll Festival (Hinu Matsuri), which takes place on March 3. During this festival girls arrange displays of intricately carved dolls, many of which have been handed down through generations, and invite friends and neighbors for tea. At one time this was a time of purification, when people made paper figures to which they transferred their impurities and threw them into the sea.

A Boy's Festival (Tango no Sekku) takes place on May 5. Soldier dolls placed outside the entrance to the house symbolically drive away evil. Boys arrange displays of miniature samurai (warriors), signifying strength and courage, and hang wind socks that depict the carp, the symbol of strength and vitality.

These boy and girl festivals, which are now celebrated more as times of family get-togethers than as religious holidays, have lost most of their religious significance, but they still serve to remind children of the nearness of the *kami* to their lives.

COMING OF AGE

Coming-of-age rites have disappeared from Shinto worship, although January 15 is celebrated across Japan as an official coming of age for all those who reach the age of 20 that year and thus can marry without parental consent. In the countryside a young man's coming to maturity is marked by inviting him to help carry the palanquin in a festival parade.

MARRIAGE BEFORE *KAMI*

One widely observed celebration is the Shinto wedding. In the past Shinto weddings were conducted at home, but today Shinto shrines with beautiful grounds are popular places for "marriage before *kami*," and many Japanese couples choose a Shinto ceremony. Marriage in Japan has always been viewed as a contract



A young girl, dressed in a kimono, is taken by her mother to a shrine to celebrate the Shichigosan festival. Prayers are offered during the ritual to help protect the young girl as she grows up. This festival takes place when girls are three and seven years old.

between two families, so it is not conducted by a priest, but by the couple themselves.

In Japan October is the month for weddings. The bride may wear a modern Western-style wedding dress, or she may choose traditional Japanese wedding clothes: a special kimono and a tall



A bride in a wedding kimono, accompanied by family and friends dressed in traditional clothes, makes her way through the precincts of a Shinto temple. Shinto shrines are becoming increasingly popular places for marriage "before the *kami*."

wig with long hairpins and a wide white headband. According to custom the headdress hides the "horns" of female jealousy. Traditional garb for the groom was a kimono and divided pants, but today most grooms choose to wear a Western-style suit or tuxedo. As a pledge of their union the couple sip rice wine from three cups. Their families then sip the wine to show loyalty to the new family that is being formed. A wedding feast follows the ceremony.

FUNERALS

Old Shinto did not have funeral rites, which came into the religion from Buddhism. Most Japanese are still "born Shinto, die Buddhist," choosing Buddhist ceremonies for funerals. But Shinto priests may conduct solemn prayers for the dead at Shinto shrines as well. The funeral ceremony marks the beginning of the dead person's new life as an ancestor who, having lived life to the fullest in accordance with the will of the *kami,* will continue to bring prosperity and blessings to the living.

THE SHINTO CALENDAR IN JAPANESE LIFE

Shinto festivals have different focuses. Some aim to ensure the well-being of particular communities by appealing for assistance from their *kami* and the souls of their ancestors. The goals of such celebrations are to attain fruitful harvests, to escape crop damage, or to avoid natural disasters. Purification rites are meant to cleanse the participants of the pollutions that separate them from the *kami* and the revered dead. Ritual prayers seek a favorable response from gods and ancestors. Other festivals are more active, including various contests on horses or in boats, ceremonial dances, and physically taxing processions. The latter are meant to increase the vitality of the *kami* and the participants as the time of planting or harvesting draws near. Such celebrations might be religious for some, but for others they are just rituals of modern society. The Snow Festival held at the city of Sapporo is a secular celebration that aims mainly to draw tourists to the area.

Festivals such as the Doll Festival (Hinu Matsuri) on March 3 or the Boy's Festival (Tango no Sekku) on May 5 are not tied to the land and its fruits, but rather are celebrations centered in family life together with friends and neighbors. Other festivals go beyond the borders of farm communities or families in their aims. The New Year Festival is a national and religious holiday. It is viewed as a time to pay debts, make apologies, and start anew.



Fortune slips and prayers containing requests to the *kami* have been written on paper and tied by visitors to a tree in the grounds of Kyoto Imperial Palace.

CHAPTER 8

SACRED PLACES AND SPACES

Japan, a country about the size of the state of California, has more than 80,000 Shinto shrines. Some are elaborate buildings patterned after Buddhist temples, with lanterns, statues, and paintings. Most are small, simple structures in peaceful natural settings or along the roadside. Still others are not buildings at all, but natural objects marked with a rice-straw rope to signify sacred space.

THE SACRED LAND

In early times people worshipped in nature. They climbed mountains to catch the first glimpse of Amaterasu, the rising sun, at dawn, and they went to ocean shores near where the sea *kami* (spirit) controlled the tides and the fish that fed the village. They found evidence of *kami* presence in great rocks and enormous trees, in deep valleys and beside rushing water, and they worshipped beside them. Those traditions still remain.

Every town and locality has its own shrine housing its guardian *kami*. Many towns also have shrines that commemorate special people or events. Shinto shrines belong to everyone and are



A Myojin-style torii gateway stands in the sea at Itsukushima Shrine, which is dedicated to a *kami* of the sea. Visitors can walk to the torii at low tide.



everyone's responsibility. Even in rural areas, at shrines that stand deep in wooded areas many miles from towns or cities, and even where there are no regular priests, it is rare to find shrine grounds that are not carefully tended. The shrines and the grounds on which they stand are all sacred land, treated with reverence.

In a larger sense, all of Japan is sacred ground. It was formed by the *kami* for the Japanese people, and everything in it is inhabited by *kami*. *Kami* dwell in all its geographical features, its mountains, trees, and flowers, the sea and the rivers, and even the highways and roads. There is no part of Japan that the *kami* do not touch, for *kami* can be anywhere and are everywhere. All of the land therefore demands, and receives, great respect from its inhabitants.

Young girls in kimonos looking out toward the city of Kyoto from Kyomizudera Temple.



The Japanese are a nation of people who love to visit the beautiful places in their own country. As "tourists" they often plan their vacations around visits to sacred waterfalls or mountains, which symbolize the presence of *kami* everywhere. To climb Mount Fuji is not merely to go sightseeing but to be in the presence of the sacred, and many Japanese tours include an element of pilgrimage.

THE SHINTO HOME

According to Shinto tradition the home itself is blessed by the *kami* and therefore sacred. It is the center of Shinto religious life. Ritual is performed within it, and *kami* reside there. Family worship within the home is central to the Shinto tradition.

Shinto ritual accompanies the building of a house. Special ceremonies consecrate the homesite and accompany various stages of the actual building, such as laying the

foundation or raising the roof. There are *kami* in every part of the house: threshold *kami,* kitchen *kami,* fireplace *kami,* even toilet *kami,* who keep away impurity and disease.

LOCAL SHRINES

Shinto began as a local religion, and every area has its own shrine with its own tutelary, or guardian, *kami.* By custom people come under the protection of the guardian *kami* of the place where they were born, and they remain under that *kami's* protection all their lives. Annual religious events, such as the New Year Festival or the Great Purification, are held at the local shrine, as are local festivals. People go individually to their shrine to give thanks to the *kami* for blessings in their own lives and in the community as a whole.

Besides being a place for ritual, festival, and private worship, the grounds of the local shrine serve as a community center in which meetings and recreational activities are held. People use shrine precincts as they would a park, for picnics and games, or just to sit and enjoy the pleasant surroundings.

Beyond the locality there may be area shrines honoring other *kami.* A seaside village, for example, might have both a shrine to its guardian deities and a shrine to the *kami* of fishers or the *kami* of sailors.

During annual festivals families traditionally visit their local shrine and participate in the rituals that bring them into

Sacred Sites

Cities as well as rural areas can have sacred associations. Kyoto and Nara, both former Japanese capitals, are sacred cities because their history is entwined with that of the imperial line. These cities have many shrines that date back to ancient times.

THE *KAMIDANA*

At one time every Japanese house had a *kamidana,* or *kami* shelf, enshrining *kami* in the home. This small altar contained a replica of a Shinto-style shrine. Each day household members made prayers and offerings at the *kamidana* as they would at a shrine, by bowing and clapping to summon ancestors and the guardian *kami* of their home and offering thanks. They kept the offerings on the *kamidana* fresh, replenishing foodstuffs, such as a rice cake or a little sake, morning and night, or adding fresh flowers. The *kamidana* also held talismans and charms bought at the local shrine or at one of the national shrines during a trip or pilgrimage, bringing the blessings of those *kami* to the home as well. During the seventh century, when Buddhist altars were mandatory in Japanese homes, *kamidana* remained, often side by side with the Buddhist altar, and people paid their respects to the deities at both altars. Many modern Japanese homes no longer have *kamidana,* although traditional households still follow the custom.

closer contact with their tutelary *kami*. At the shrines people can buy talismans and charms to take back to their homes, thus ensuring the presence there of the guardian *kami*. So the protection of the local *kami* is transferred to the home, completing the circle of sacredness.

SHRINE STRUCTURE

At its simplest a Shinto shrine is a rectangular space to which the *kami* come. A traditional shrine is made of natural materials such as rough-hewn timber, unpainted wood, thatch, and stone. Shrines are not particularly large. Priests enter them to perform rites, but people stand outside to worship. Inside the shrine is an altar or an inner sanctuary tended by Shinto priests and containing a silk-lined box, which holds an object that symbolizes the heavenly *kami*.

A pull for a bell woven in straw. The bell is rung by visitors to the shrine to announce their presence to the *kami*.



The interior of a shrine has no decoration. There are no representations of *kami* within a shrine, neither pictures nor statues. There may be a display of ordinary objects such as stones, swords or bow and arrows, beads, and perhaps a mirror, any of which might be sacred to the various *kami,* but images of them are unnecessary because the *kami* themselves are there.

Small shrines often stand alone, but larger shrines may be part of a complex containing a number of sanctuaries and auxiliary buildings. A large shrine compound may have an oratory, or speaker's stand, a pavilion with flowing water for ritual purification, a building in which to prepare food offerings, a shrine office, an auditorium for sacred dances, and a pavilion where people may leave votive tablets or other offerings, along with one or more sanctuaries and other structures.

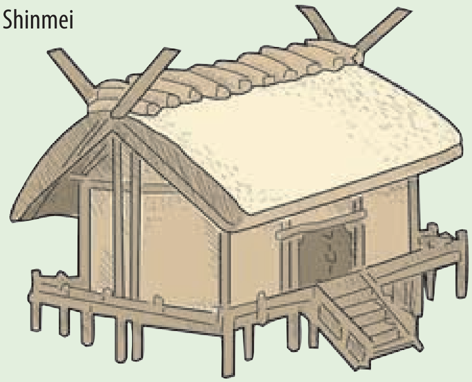
FOUR TYPICAL SHRINE STYLES

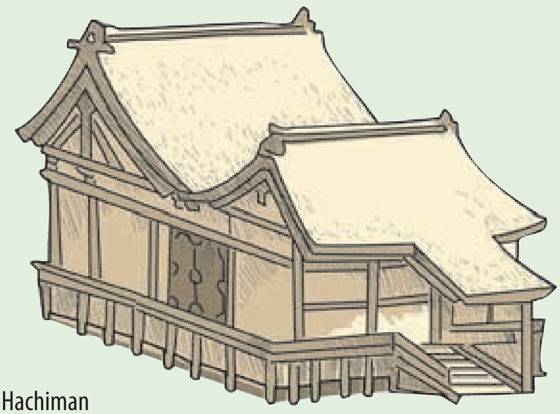
The earliest Shinto shrines were modeled after Japanese dwellings and storage buildings. Most were simple, with a single chamber on a raised platform and a peaked roof. Later shrines were influenced by Chinese architecture, particularly Buddhist temples, and became more elaborate. Here are four traditional designs.

Taisha

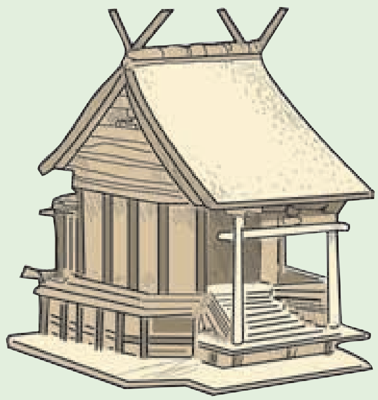


Shinmei





Hachiman



Nagare

Whenever possible shrines are placed near water, and many shrine grounds still contain a spring, a brook, or a pond. In ancient times worshippers scooped up a little water from a stream or the sea to rinse their hands and mouths. Today every shrine approach has an ablution pavilion, a place where people may stop to purify themselves ritually before they worship. Often this pavilion is an open shed with a stone basin and running water.



A line of torii leading to a temple. The torii mark the entry to a sacred Shinto space and delineate the boundaries between the worlds of the secular and the sacred.

Many shrines include stalls or a small shop from which people can get charms and talismans for their *kamidana,* or home altar, in return for a small offering. Throughout the year these are sold to pilgrims and visitors at festivals and at the larger national shrines.

THE SHRINE GROUNDS

Shrine grounds are themselves sacred land. Over centuries many shrines have been carefully sited in places that evoke feelings of respect and awe because of their natural beauty, perhaps near a mountain, a grove of trees, or a river, or overlooking the ocean. Others are located where some historical event took place or where an ancient and respected family lived.

Much effort goes into making the shrine grounds a place of peaceful beauty. Even in cities, where land is scarce and grounds may be small, trees and plantings evoke a natural setting and suggest the closeness of nature.

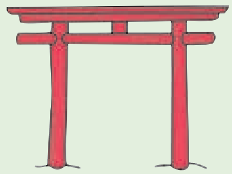
Shrines usually face south or sometimes east; north and west are considered unlucky directions. Customarily a fence or a wall surrounds the shrine grounds, and there may be inner fences as well, perhaps enclosed by a gate.

TORII, THE SYMBOL OF SHINTO

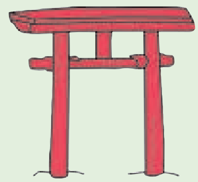
Worshippers enter the shrine through a torii, a gateway that symbolizes the separation of the outside world from the world of the *kami* and marks the entrance into

TORII—GATEWAY TO SHINTO SHRINES

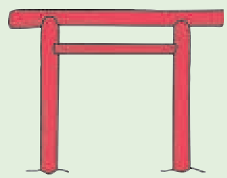
Torii, the open gateways that mark the approach to a shrine, come in a variety of styles both simple and elaborate. Originally of rough–hewn, natural timber, they are now made of other materials, including metal and concrete, and often painted red.



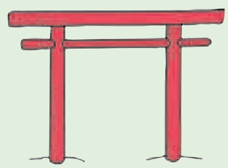
Hachiman torii



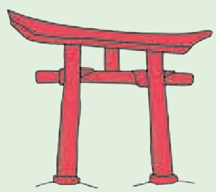
Kasuga torii



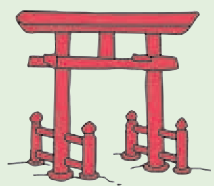
Shinmei torii



Kashima torii



Myojin torii



Ryobu torii

sacred space. There are many styles of torii, but each is distinctive in basic design. Originally the torii consisted of two unfinished wooden pillars with two crossbeams. Later, under outside architectural influences, the pillars were planed smooth and painted, usually red, and eventually came to be made of other materials, such as metal or concrete.

A large shrine may have a row of torii through which worshippers pass. The Fushimi Inari Shrine in Tokyo has more than 10,000 scarlet-painted torii, in a line almost 2½ miles (4 kilometers) long.

THE APPROACH

Worshippers pass through the torii on a path that leads to the shrine. This is the *sando,* or approach. It is usually a dirt path spread with pebbles or neatly raked packed sand, and it contributes to the natural atmosphere. Ideally the path winds through the grounds, but if the area is small it may go directly to the shrine.

Lanterns made of stone or bronze, donated by worshippers, often line the approach. Elaborate lanterns are a borrowing from Buddhism, but fire, a purifying element in Shinto ritual, has always been a traditional means of greeting the *kami.* Along the path, too, may be stone tablets memorializing local national historic events. There may also be a stone pillar called a *hykudo ishi,* or "hundred times stone." Worshippers with a particularly urgent request may walk back and forth 100 times between the stone and the shrine to emphasize their plea.



Lion statue guarding the entrance to a temple in Miyajima island, Japan. At Shinto shrines animal images are symbolic of protection.

Since many shrines are in natural settings the grounds may contain ancient trees or great rocks that traditionally have *kami* presence. If so, these often have a rice-straw rope around them to show their special sacredness. Almost every shrine has on its grounds a sakaki tree, the

sacred tree of Shinto, the tree that the *kami* hung with jewels and cloth and the mirror to lure the sun goddess Amaterasu out of her cave.

SHRINE GUARDIANS

Beside the shrine entrance may be guardians of the shrine precincts. Sometimes these take the form of miniature shrines. At large shrines the guardians may be huge semihuman figures with angry expressions to ward off evil. These figures were originally Buddhist, but they came to be guardians of Shinto shrines as well. Another traditional guardian pair are two seated figures, each dressed in ancient court garb and each carrying a bow and arrows. They represent mythological *kami.*

Animal protectors also appear. The most common are male and female lions or dogs, which stand on pedestals along the approach. At Inari shrines the image is a fox, which is believed to be an attendant of Inari, the rice *kami.* At Kasuga shrines the animal guardian is a deer. Other animal images include horses, the traditional mount of the *kami,* or monkeys and wolves. Like other statuary on Shinto grounds, these shrine guardians reflect Buddhist influence.

SHRINE CONSTRUCTION

The earliest Shinto shrines were built like the homes of the Japanese people of the day. They were unadorned square or rectangular structures placed on a platform with a low railing and a stairway to the door. Most were one-room buildings with an inner chamber to hold a sacred symbol of the *kami,* and a place for offerings either outside or just inside the building. Traditional shrines were made of unpainted, rough-hewn wood, usually cypress, thatched with bark. The buildings themselves were much less impressive than

Refreshing the *Kami*

Following ancient traditions and practices, every 20 years a shrine is taken down and rebuilt in a ceremony of shrine renewal. At that time the shrine's divine treasures are renewed as well, and the old ones are buried on the shrine grounds. Shrine renewal is more than just refurbishment of old shrines. The accompanying Shinto ritual refreshes and renews the spiritual life of the *kami* in that place.

their surroundings and, in their simplicity and naturalness, they were designed to merge with the surrounding area.

Many Shinto shrines have a characteristic roof style. The end beams, or *chigi,* form an X, crossing at the ridge and continuing upward. The ridgepole lies across them, cradled by the crossed beams. On top of the ridgepole are short beams, or *katsuogi.* Originally they held down the roof, although with modern construction methods they are now purely decorative. The distinctive roof design of a Shinto shrine carries no religious significance. It is simply an antique design that has been carried over into modern times.

As Buddhism gained in popularity Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines became more similar in design. Under the influence of Buddhism shrines became more elaborate and colorful. Shrine interiors were divided into rooms, sometimes under separate roof beams. Later shrines were often painted, most of them a rich ocre-red.

WITHIN THE SHRINE

Within the shrine sanctuary is an inner chamber with two swinging doors that are kept locked except when a priest is performing sacred rites. Inside, on a raised platform or altar, lies the *shintai,* the sacred object or divine embodiment of the *kami* enshrined there. The divine object is wrapped in silk and enclosed in a box, which is never opened. A curtain, usually made of split bamboo, hides the box from view, even by the priest. Not all shrines have *shintai.* Some have *mitamashiro,* or substitute divine treasures, which are usually representations of *shintai,* such as mirrors or swords. To the Shinto worshipper, it does not matter whether the sacred object is *shintai* or *mitamashiro.* The presence of the object sanctifies the building and makes it a home of the *kami.* If the object is removed the building is no longer sacred.

THE OFFERING TABLE

In front of the inner chamber is a table for offerings. On or behind the offering table is a *gohei,* a wand hung with paper folded and



The window of a shrine sanctuary in a Shinto temple. Only the priest performs rituals inside the shrine sanctuary, where there is a locked inner chamber containing the *shintai.*

placed in a ritual manner. The *gohei* symbolizes the presence of *kami* and is also a symbolic offering to the *kami.*

An *onusa,* a purification wand with long strips of white paper and flax attached at one end, stands nearby. During a ceremony the priest removes it from its stand and waves it over the person or object to be purified. A branch of the sacred sakaki tree is sometimes used in place of or in addition to the purification wand, and if so, it also rests on the offering table.

OTHER SHRINE OBJECTS

The *Kojiki*, the first volume of Japan's history, tells that Izanagi, one of the creators of Japan, gave his children a polished disk of silver and told them to look at themselves in it to be sure that it reflected only a pure spirit. Many shrines contain mir-

The Mirror

The mirror hides nothing. It shines without a selfish mind. Everything good and bad, right and wrong, is reflected without fail. The mirror is the source of honesty because it has the virtue of responding according to the shape of objects. It points out the fairness and impartiality of the divine will.

(In Chikafusa Kitabatake, *Jinno Shotoki,* from 1339.)

rors as sacred objects, but in addition, mirrors are often placed before the doors of the inner compartment of a sanctuary as ornaments. Banners may be hung nearby, an ornamental borrowing from Buddhism now signifying the presence of *kami*. A sword and shield and jewels are often hung with the banners as symbols of the power of the *kami* to protect and bless the people, and of the will of the people to defend the *kami*. Shinto believers understand that the mirror symbolizes wisdom; the jewels, a giving and benevolent spirit; and the sword, courage.

Beginning around the seventh century C.E. shrine buildings also housed divine treasures for use by the *kami*, who were deemed to be always within. Daggers, swords, archery equipment, furniture, clothing, jewelry, and musical instruments were made by master craftspeople and displayed. Shinto artists produced paintings and sculpture for the honor of the *kami* as well. Many works

The Shrine at Ise is a complex of shrines that is officially known as Jingu. Within the complex, the inner shrine of Naiku is the most sacred of Japanese shrines and Amaterasu, the ancestral *kami* of the imperial line, is worshipped here.



of sculpture were monumental or life-size images of *kami* carved from single tree trunks, thus preserving their *kami* nature. They too went to the shrines, where they were placed behind a screen or curtain so as not to distract the worshipper.

THE SHRINES AT ISE

The shrine of the sun goddess Amaterasu at Ise is the most revered of all Shinto shrines. Amaterasu, the guardian deity of the imperial line, is worshipped there at the inner shrine, Naiku, as the symbol of the Japanese state. The Ise Shrine compound also contains a second major shrine about 4 miles (7.2 kilometers) away—the outer shrine, Geku, to the harvest *kami*.

THE SHRINE GROUNDS

The shrine grounds at Ise are large and ancient. Three torii mark the entrance to the shrines. Huge cedars, *Cryptomeria japonica,* some more than 50 feet (15 meters) tall and densely planted, line the way. The Isuzu River runs through the grounds, and the winding gravel approach takes worshippers close to the water so they may use it to cleanse their hands and mouths according to ancient custom. The crunching of gravel and stones underfoot discourages talk so people move mostly in silence along the approach, feeling the presence of the divine. Worshippers customarily do not take requests to Ise but go in purity of heart and mind to hear the will of the *kami.*

The main shrine buildings, in pure classical Shinmei style and surrounded by raked white stones, sit behind four high fences, or curtains. They are simple rectangles, about 47 by 30 feet (15 by 9 meters) and rising about 35 feet (12 meters). The thatched roofs are about 3 feet (1 meter)

Renewal of the Ise Shrines

The buildings at the shrines at Ise are renewed every 20 years, following an order of Emperor Temmu, who reigned from 672 to 686 C.E. They have been rebuilt more than 60 times, always in exact replica. The bridges and walkways that link the buildings are renewed as well in a continuous program of rebuilding. The teams of carpenters who maintain the shrine wear white, the color of purity, and ritually purify themselves as they work. If so much as one drop of blood falls on a piece of wood it is discarded so that ritual purity may be maintained in the building.

thick, topped by *katsuogi*—10 on the shrine to Amaterasu, nine on the Naiku Shrine. The shrines at Ise date to 685 and the reign of Emperor Temmu. By his order its design cannot be used or copied in other buildings, so it is unique. However, the buildings at the shrines are renewed every 20 years

NAIKU—THE INNER SHRINE

The Naiku Shrine at Ise has a long association with the imperial family. Only high-ranking priests and priestesses and members of the imperial family or their representatives enter the shrine. By custom, the emperor visits Ise at the times of important national festivals and other national events to inform Amaterasu personally. In modern times Emperor Hirohito (r. 1926–89) went to the shrine as a young man before traveling out of the country, on the occasion of his wedding, and at his coronation. During World War II he kept Amaterasu apprised of the course of the war, and after Japan's defeat he returned to Ise to explain and apologize for what had happened. Important national events are announced at Ise. When the crown prince was married he and his bride went first to Ise.

The sacred object at the Naiku Shrine is the mirror given by Amaterasu to her great-grandson Ninigi when she sent him to rule earth, telling him to worship it as her spirit. Originally it was handed down within the imperial family and kept at the palace shrine, but because of its great significance to the nation and the Japanese people it was moved to the grand shrine at Ise. The imperial shrine now has a replica. The imperial family retains Amaterasu's jewels. The third piece of imperial regalia, the sword of Susanowo, the storm god, is kept at the Atsuta Shrine in Nagoya.

The shrines at Ise attract many visitors each year. Families, schoolchildren, young and old people, businesspeople and workers, all travel to Ise to enjoy its beauty and to be spiritually refreshed by its sacredness. The shrines at Ise are among Japan's greatest national shrines. Worship there is the highest expression of respect to the emperor, the country, and all Japanese cul-

ture as well as to Amaterasu. Pilgrims travel there for prayer and spiritual renewal; a pilgrimage to Ise connects the Japanese to the *kami* power that founded their nation. They buy paper talismans to take back to their *kamidana,* carrying the blessing of the sun goddess into their homes.

OTHER SHRINES

Famous and beautiful shrines of all kinds dot Japan. Many have great national significance. One of these is the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. This is a special shrine for war dead, who were believed to become *kami* when they gave their lives for their country. During the time of State Shinto in the 1800s the Yasukuni Shrine was one of the largest and most influential in the nation, and it is still prized for its historical significance. The shrine has, however, become a center for extreme right-wing activity as some of the dead were declared war criminals after World War II ended in 1945 by Japan's opponents in the war. A visit by any leading Japanese politician is seen by countries such as China or Korea, who suffered under Japanese rule, as an insult to them.

The Meiji Shrine commemorates Emperor Meiji (r. 1868–1912), and other great emperors have shrines dedicated to them as well. On the coast of Honshu opposite Ise is the shrine of Izumo, where Susanowo fought with the eight-headed serpent. An ancient shrine, it is believed to stand on the site where Susanowo's descendant Oho-kuni-nushi had his palace, and where Ninigi first took control of the country.

In Toyokawa the shrine to Inari draws huge crowds. Inari, once a Buddhist god of rice harvest, is now associated with success in business. The shrine is part of a Buddhist temple complex, reflecting the time when Buddhist grounds included Shinto shrines. Huge crowds gather there at festivals, especially the New Year Festival, to enjoy the festivities and pray for success in business and for prosperity.

The shrine of Itsukushima is dedicated to the sea *kami*. Its torii rise from the water at high tide. The shrine of Kasuga stands in deep woods where deer, the messengers of that *kami,* wander free-

ly. These and other such shrines emphasize the closeness and power of nature.

Some shrines specialize in a particular kind of blessing. A seashore shrine, for example, might offer the blessing of good fishing. At exam time students visit the shrine of *kami* associated with good grades. Often people who are seeking marriage visit shrines associated with *ryoen,* making good marriages, and *enmusubi,* linking people together as a couple. The Izumo Shrine is popular with couples and with singles seeking partners. During his long transformation from troublemaker to benefactor Susanowo became associated with love and now receives petitions for suitable matches.

The All–Powerful

A leaflet handed out by the Jishu Shrine in Kyoto praises family life and marriage and says, in part:

"There are still many things in this world that are unattainable through human power alone. At such times how grateful we are that we can depend on the power of the kami to eliminate all the hindrances..."

(In Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan.*)

Some shrines attract visitors and tourists because of their well-kept grounds and interesting histories. Others receive pilgrims, individuals who make a pledge to the *kami* to visit a particular shrine or a group of shrines. Devotees may try to visit as many of Japan's more than 80,000 shrines as they can.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SACRED SPACES

Sacred spaces for the Japanese are not limited to shrine buildings and their immediate surroundings. Sacred spaces can be found wherever there are *kami*. There are *kami* in great rocks and enormous trees; in the thresholds, kitchens, fireplaces, and *kami* shelves of homes; in the villages of fishermen; and on the ships of sailors, making all these and many more places sacred spaces, too. Additional sacred spaces include those places where babies have been born or where they celebrate their birth rituals or coming-of-age rites. They are also the beautiful grounds of shrines where marriages are celebrated.

The Japanese people constantly need to recall that every corner of their homeland and every aspect of their cultural life has a further spiritual dimension. They must see this if they are to



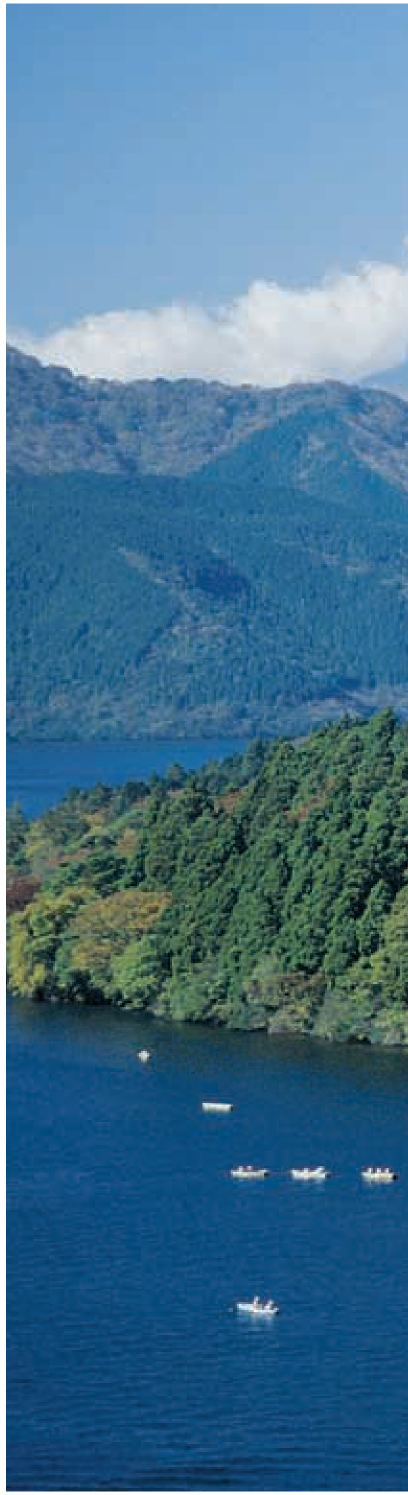
be truly aware and appreciative of the bounty of nature and the unpredictable character of good and bad fortune. They are always conscious of the blessings of the *kami* from whom all things come, and they are continually aware of the rhythms of life that are marked by good and bad times.

Even if they are not religious the Japanese people derive a strong spiritual dimension from their Shinto traditions. This enables them to draw joy and spiritual refreshment from the land and sea that surround them, from the homes and families that nourish them, and from remembered and venerated ancestors who, through example, inspire them continually to develop courage, determination, and strength. Shinto values pulse through all that they do.

Sacred spaces are everywhere the *kami* are, and the *kami* inhabit every corner of Japan. They are the sacred spiritual powers informing Japan's lands, its people, and its government.

CHAPTER 9

SHINTO TODAY



When one knows the nature and history of Shinto, it is difficult to imagine it surviving in the modern world. Shinto has been so tied to an agrarian lifestyle—with its natural rhythms, its *kami* of farms and woodlands, and its center in family life—that one can hardly picture it having a role in an urban industrial setting. Its preservation seemed guaranteed more than a century ago only because Japan had chosen to keep itself cut off from the developing Western industrial world.

Today Japan is one of the world's strongest industrial nations. Upon the ruins of World War II modern Japan rebuilt itself into a country of active, thriving cities and commerce. Its factories compete throughout the world, challenging the chief car- and truck-exporting countries of the West, replacing American and European firms as leaders in the field of electronics, exporting appliances throughout the globe, and sharing the lead in technology with the great industrial countries of the world.

Shinto has traditionally played a twofold role in Japanese society. First, it has helped members of families to find meaning

Mount Fuji, the highest mountain in Japan at 12,388 feet (3,754 meters), seen from Lake Ashi on the island of Honshu in Japan. There is a torii gate on the shore of the lake that symbolically welcomes worshippers to the heavenly *kami* present in the land.



in life and, with the aid of the *kami,* to meet the challenges they face in all the different areas of their existence. This first role has been the concern of religious Shinto from its earliest days. Second, Shinto has also nurtured in the Japanese people a feeling of solidarity and has attempted to unite all Japanese as citizens of a larger national society. This effort has been supported by traditional religious Shinto and by State Shinto, the nonreligious form of Shinto that treats its members as followers of a cultural, rather than a religious, tradition.

SHINTO IN POSTWAR JAPAN

After World War II ended in 1945 the forces of occupation ordered the Japanese government to cut all ties with Shinto shrines. This was the way they believed nationalism and worship of the emperor would be weakened and eventually eradicated. No public funds could be used to support Shinto shrines. The government attempted to preserve Shinto tradition by declaring State Shinto to be cultural, not religious. In this way the Japanese people could continue many of their traditions. Visits to shrines, however, waned and Shinto festivals diminished. To continue the disappearing religious dimensions of Shinto, some Japanese quietly switched to Buddhism to meet their spiritual needs. Others joined the New Religions of Sect Shinto that had developed to adapt Shinto to the modern world and its demands.

SHINTO AND CITY LIFE

The war, however, had changed Japanese life appreciably. As the people attempted to rebuild their homeland they inexorably pursued opportunities available in the offices and factories of the growing cities. Once again, but much more dramatically, the people lost contact with the agricultural rhythms that have been the foundation of the Shinto way of life. Not only did they lose contact with the shrines of their rural backgrounds, they also lost, more and more, their tight bonds to the families that had preserved their Shinto religious roots. Likewise city life divorced people from the natural life of the rural areas that had contin-



Torii gateway leading to a Shinto shrine in the heart of a modern Japanese city. As cities grew and people moved away from rural areas, many lost contact with the agricultural patterns that shaped the Shinto way of life, but the city shrines meet the needs and prayers of people living in an urban setting and often provide the only tree-filled green area.

ually acknowledged the presence of *kami*. In the bustling cities fewer homes had *kamidana,* and many religious ceremonies were no longer celebrated. Sacred ceremonies were reduced to purely secular celebrations.

THE PEACE CONSTITUTION OF 1946

Although the Peace Constitution of 1946 guaranteed freedom of religion, it also ordered the Japanese government to sever all ties with Shinto shrines and forbade the use of public funds to support these shrines. While this was a serious blow to Shrine Shinto, private support of the people became strong, and the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honcho) was formed to rebuild ruined shrines and to revive religious practices. More than 80,000 shrines of various sizes now exist in Japan. Some of the larger ones, which have become tourist attractions, are more secular in character and are administered by government appointees. Others are purely shrines where many Japanese, weary from the hustle and bustle of modern commercial life, seek spiritual refreshment through their Shinto ritual traditions.

ASSOCIATION OF SHINTO SHRINES

The Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honcho), formed after the end of World War II in 1945, sets forth its goals for modern Shinto in three principles:

1. To express gratitude for divine favor and the benefits of ancestors, and with a bright, pure, sincere mind to devote ourselves to the shrine rites and festivals.
2. To serve society and others and, in the realization of ourselves as divine messengers, to endeavor to improve and consolidate the world.
3. To identify our minds with the emperor's mind and, in loving and being friendly with one another, to pray for the country's prosperity and for peaceful coexistence and co-prosperity for the people of the world.

(In Sokyo Ono, *Shinto, the Kami Way*.)

The tensions between those who want to preserve the traditional religious dimensions of Shinto and those who wish for a more secular interpretation of Shinto traditions are very strong.

The case of the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo is a good example of these tensions. It was a great honor to be enshrined at Yasukuni as a person of religious dedication to one's country. Yasukuni is both a shrine and a war memorial. As a religious shrine, support for it is forbidden. As a war memorial, many military leaders and the families of those who died in war have lobbied to nationalize the shrine. Opposing this measure are those who fear the revival of the kind of intense nationalism that marked the identification of the state and Shinto religion.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS IN A SECULAR AGE

The Peace Constitution of 1946 forced government officials at every level to avoid public support of religion. One way of fulfilling this requirement has been to turn the traditional religious festivals into cultural events that draw crowds of tourists. The festivals have become secular events that bring people back to nature, put them in touch again with *kami,* and promote harmony and unity among the participants. Since these festivals include religious rituals, religious participants enjoy spiritual renewal, whereas nonreligious participants share in the joy and warmth of cultural remembrances.

Cultural celebrations often draw people on the basis of their renown. Advertising and promotions tend to entice crowds to the national shrines such as Meiji in Tokyo, Sumiyoshi in Osaka, Atsuta in Nagoya, and Fushimi Inari in Kyoto. At these popu-



A *mikoshi,* or portable shrine containing a *kami,* is carried through the streets by young men at festival time. The procession enables the *kami* to visit the area under its protection and allows the community to show reverence to their local *kami.*

lar shrines visitors often number in the millions. Smaller local shrines tend to draw lesser numbers, but the participants are distinctly religious, pursuing visits that are much more marked by prayer and meditation.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGES

As Americans might visit Yosemite Park, the Grand Canyon, or the Liberty Bell, so many Japanese plan their vacations around the more than 80,000 shrines throughout Japan. Many tourists are courted by the advertising of famous shrines or of those in scenic areas. Some shrines have large collections of art that make them equivalent to museums. Others offer lessons in national pride that supplement family outings and picnics. Many of the smaller shrines in rural areas, now quite depopulated by the exodus to the cities, sell charms for luck, or memorabilia, or offer tours for visitors.

In contrast to these cultural excursions, however, modern Shinto believers also make pilgrimages. They may choose to visit a group of shrines or a particular shrine repeatedly to show special respect to the *kami* of that shrine. Often they make their pilgrimages on foot, walking from shrine to shrine in a spirit of special devotion. At times urban Shinto believers will visit their favorite shrine before work or during lunchtime.

SHINTO IN THE WORLD OF BIG BUSINESS

The Shinto values of honesty, cooperation, loyalty, and unified effort are very much prized by Japanese businesses. With the great migration of people from the village to the larger cities, companies have taken over the role of the village, encouraging workers to imagine themselves as parts of an extended corporate family. People are hired for a position in a company very much as if they are joining a family. It is as if they are told, “This business will be your home for life.”

Shinto ideals are inculcated from birth and set the tone for a workplace that is envied by manufacturers throughout the world. Western companies study the methods of cooperation,

teamwork, and loyalty in Japanese businesses to try to improve production in their own worlds.

The companies have gone beyond pursuing Shinto ideals. They imitate Shinto practices by constructing their own office buildings and setting up altars where they pray for assistance and make offerings to the building *kami*. Businesses have at times even erected shrines in their office buildings to provide a quiet place of beauty for nonreligious staff and a spiritual home to facilitate devotions for those who want to observe them.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE NEW RELIGIONS

From the perspectives of the New Religions, the 13 denominations classified as Sect Shinto during the State Shinto period stand in contrast to the established mainstream Japanese religions, Shinto and Buddhism. The established religions were viewed as institutionalized and grounded in the social setting of the household rather than on individual faith and commitment. They are portrayed by the New Religions as hierarchical, bureaucratic, and out of touch with the lives and spiritual needs of ordinary individuals.

It is important to keep this portrait of the established religions in mind in order to understand the appeal of the New Religions. They represent themselves as a confident and continuing effort to provide an individually based faith that would be relevant to individual believers in their everyday life. Joining a new religion is at first a matter of conversion and personal faith, not a matter of social circumstances. The general tendency among the New Religions is to think of the older new religions as tending to become stale and routine. Even the older new religions often

INTERFAITH RELATIONS

In recent years the Association of Shinto Shrines has begun to take a significant role in interfaith relationships. In particular Shinto, as an indigenous religion, has taken a special interest in indigenous traditions and cultures worldwide. These communities are often under considerable pressure from the modern world, and Shinto offers encouragement and respect for ancient traditions. For example many such indigenous communities live in forested areas where commercial forestry and the inroads of a secular worldview are taking a toll on traditional lifestyles. In the last few years the Jinja Honcho has become an active partner in creating awareness of the religious significance of forests as a sacred landscape essential to the well-being of peoples and the planet.

LIFE-GIVING *KAMI*

Shinto priests and leaders have been active in attending many international interfaith events, enabling an exchange of ideas between traditions. With this has come a broadening of traditional Shinto thinking whereby the whole world is seen as sacred, imbued with *kami*. This is well expressed in the following Jinja Honcho Statement on Nature, issued in 2000:

> *Shinto regards the land and its environment as children of Kami. In other words, Shinto sees nature as the divinity itself. These days people often say, "Be gentle to nature" or "Be gentle to the earth." But these expressions sound somehow like the fault of putting the cart before the horse. We feel it is humanity's arrogance. It seems that humans can dominate nature as the master and ultimately "repair" nature, using technical-scientific means. But Kami are the origin of all lives, and the life of all things is deeply connected to them. This leads to an awareness of the sacredness of life and an appreciation for life given by Kami.*

The Shinto have never been a missionary group. This is still the case today. In their interfaith work the Shinto try to bring a deeper understanding of their own tradition and hope that through a better understanding of what they are and do, other major world faiths will perhaps better understand indigenous religions and their distinctive contribution to a better world.

lose members to the newer and more dynamic groups such as Rissho Kosei Kai, which was founded in 1948 with a highly personalized structure for members and powerful teachings about how to live a good life.

The Sect Shinto groups were suppressed, or at least discouraged, when State Shinto was obligatory, but with the Peace Constitution's guarantee of freedom of religion, they have attracted many followers. Each new religion tends more to reinterpret and to provide an alternative reformulation of extant religions rather than to present new ideas. They make what already exists more relevant for people in contemporary society. New religions tend either to focus on the declarations of their founders as divine messages and their writings as revealed scriptures, or, if they are connected to Buddhism, to base their reforms on particular texts from the Buddhist canon.

No matter what the source of their inspiration, the New Religions stress the importance of ancestral spirits and believe that misfortunes are spiritual trials that require religious and ritual solutions. Through techniques learned in the New Religion and through the grace of its leaders and *kami*, people can find liberation, solve their problems, and have happy lives. The New Religions are religions of this world—they have an attitude that is positive and supportive, often asserting that the aim of existence is to live a good,

happy, and positive life here on earth. The New Religions are religions for people who have lost their natural communities and want to belong to a group of like-minded people. It is their way of re-creating a community feeling.

THE ENDURING VITALITY OF SHRINE SHINTO

Many Japanese sense that a great deal of their spiritual heritage has been buried under the pressures of the secularization that dominates modern society. They see cultural Shinto as totally nonreligious. They view the New Religions as competitors for the hearts and minds of those who want their religion to be relevant. Religious Shinto, however, has always found ways to adapt. It has adapted to the challenges of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism throughout its history. More recently it has kept its identity despite the challenges of State Shinto.

As their shrines began to fall into ruin when State Shinto was forbidden to support their upkeep and repair, the believing Shinto community raised money to refurbish them. When deserted villages left few people to pray to the *kami* of the rice harvest, or when fishermen deserted their boats and neglected the *kami* of the sea, the Shinto faithful in the cities discovered new *kami*—the *kami* of businesses. Shinto believers discovered new *kami* in the many new arenas of their lives. Students made pilgrimages to Tenmanju Shrines to ask

FROM THE *DOKA* OF KUROZUMI MUNETADA

Kurozumi Munetada, the founder of Jurozomi Shinto, expressed his religious beliefs in *doka,* or "poems of the way." Munetada's *doka* are 276 verses written as tanka, the 31-syllable poetic form that dates to before the *Kojiki*, the first volume of the history of Japan. This is a selection from a group of 62 *doka* translated by Harold Wright. They express the appreciation of natural beauty, the hopefulness, and the joy that are typical of both ancient and modern Shinto belief. The first verse here is to Amaterasu, the sun goddess.

The divine virtue
of Amaterasu
fills Heaven and Earth;
Ah, in such abundance
is this limitless grace.

If we remember
that all things around us
are divine reflections
Whether asleep or awake
we will know such gratitude

Day after day
we face the morning sun
aware in our hearts
That our lives are limitless
A feeling of such joy.

In this world of ours
we have all come together
to form a Circle
Let us pray to be joined
by the Heart of all our hearts.

the *kami* of study to help them get good grades. Athletes at the 1972 Winter Olympics at Sapporo and the 1998 Winter Olympics at Nagano prayed to the *kami* of the mountains to give them victory in their contests. Businessmen visited shrines before work and appealed to the *kami* to bring them financial prosperity. Praying and honoring the *kami* still remains strong, meeting the needs that arise in an ever-changing urban setting.

SHINTO, THE SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF JAPANESE CULTURE

It is in the Shinto festivals that the heart of Japan can be seen. Shinto is judged at times not to be a religion because it has neither scriptures nor saints. Yet the Latin *ligare,* one of the roots of the word religion, means "to bind," and Shinto is a binding force within society. Japanese religion is based on feelings rather than doctrines, and these feelings are best revealed in the celebration of festivals where the Japanese people reveal their contact with the divine in its simpler aspects.

In these acts of celebration the Japanese people reveal their spiritual view of nature and their deep reverence for their ancestors. In both cases the festival participants reveal their sense of dependence on natural forces beyond themselves in all the activities they perform throughout the year. They also acknowledge their indebtedness to their ancestors for giving them the gift of life and all the benefits that allow them to enjoy it. Along with this sense of dependence is the awareness of the need for thanksgiving that they should be expressing to their *kami*. Awareness of dependency and gratitude for the various gifts of life are central to the Shinto way of life.

This fundamental Shinto approach to life is revealed most of all in the family, which is the backbone of society. Children become aware of how parents protect and

A World Religion?

In recent years Shintoism has had to grapple with whether it is a world religion. This is due to the rise in the number of Japanese communities overseas—for example in Hawaii and Canada—and the need to maintain both a sense of being Japanese as well as a relationship with the physical environment of these new communities. This has led to a wider sense of the sacred and a belief that the *kami* are not just present in Japan, but worldwide.

care for them, and they realize that they can never repay the debt they owe to their parents. They also learn that the interests of the family are more important than those of the individual. These are lessons not learned from books or lectures, but from the lived experience of how the family functions and celebrates its connection to others, and how the family expresses its gratitude to all the *kami* that have brought special benefits to it.



A mother and daughter praying at Senso-ji Temple in Tokyo. The inhabitants of the city find new *kami* that are relevant to the lives and needs of their families.

A similar set of attitudes is developed in the collection of families called a village. This is the natural extension of family life that manifests further dependence on other families for assistance and support in all the endeavors of human life. For this help, the Shinto families all express their gratitude to those who surround them. This extends further to regional and national dependency and gratitude and builds a cohesiveness and spirit of cooperation and unity among all the Japanese people.

Shinto has been preserved not by doctrines but by experiences in the family, the village, the region, and the whole of Japanese society. Those experiences mirror the basic attitudes of Japanese culture. Japanese society is based on natural groupings, such as the family and the village, rather than on groups centered in education, occupations, or individual preferences. Even as these natural settings have been tainted by modern alterations of life, the culture of the Japanese is so rooted in its Shinto past that companies and businesses follow the rhythms of the family and village as they develop. They are directed by the Shinto values of honesty, cooperation, loyalty, and unity of effort. Shinto is the very basis of Japanese culture.

FACT FILE

Worldwide Numbers
Shinto worship exists almost exclusively in Japan, where the majority of the 128 million population identify themselves as Shinto. There may be 3 or 4 million followers of Shinto in other parts of the world.

Holy Symbol
The torii gate consisting of two upright bars and two crossbars marks all Shinto shrines and places associated with the mystical powers of nature.



Holy Writings
Two books, *Nihongi* and *Kojiki,* are seen as important. They are written versions of oral traditions, myths, and beliefs.

Holy Places
Acts of worship take place at shrines, which are also homes to *kami,* the gods. The shrine at Ise is the most important. Mount Fuji is regarded as the home of the gods.

Founders
There is no founder as such: The faith developed through the ancient traditions, myths, and customs of the Japanese people.

Festivals
The New Year's Day festival is the biggest celebration but there are festivals almost every month.

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WEB SITES

Further facts and figures, history, and current status of the religion can be found on the following Web sites:

http://www.religioustolerance.org/shinto.htm
A basic introduction to the Shinto religion can be found on this Web site, which also acts as a portal to other sites about Shinto beliefs and traditions.

http://jinja.jp/english
Information produced by The Shinto Online Network Association giving a good insight into all aspects of Shinto religion.

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto
A comprehensive look at the Shinto religion, including details of festivals, rites, and rituals. There is also a history of Shinto.

www.japan-guide.com
A Japanese Web site with up-to-date information about tourism, travel, and events in Japan, including Shinto festivals and shrines.

GLOSSARY

Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honcho)—Organization that oversees Shinto shrines, the Shinto priesthood, and the calendar of religious festivals in modern Japan.

chigi—Characteristic crossed end-beams of the roof of some Shinto shrines.

daimyo—Nobles who administered large land holdings and peasants during feudal times under the shoguns.

doka—"Poetry of the way," religious tanka, especially that written by Kurozumi Munetada, founder of Kurozumi Shinto.

Engishiki—Collection of ancient Shinto myths.

Folk Shinto—Ancient form of Shinto on which most modern Shinto practices and beliefs are based.

gohei—Symbolic offering to the *kami;* a wand hung with folded strips of white paper.

Imperial Household Shinto—Shinto worship carried on by the emperor as chief priest.

Ise—Location of the shrine complex dedicated to Amaterasu and containing the Naiku Shrine, most sacred of all Shinto shrines.

kagura—Sacred dances performed during Shinto ceremonies and festivals.

kami—A god or gods worshipped in Shinto, who represent natural phenomena or mythological ancestors, such as Amaterasu, the sun goddess.

kamidana—Shinto *kami* shelf, or altar, usually found in the home.

Kojiki—"Record of Ancient Matters," thought to be written in 712 C.E. and recording the mythological origins of Japan and the imperial line.

matsuri—Term for a Shinto festival.

Meiji—Emperor whose rule began in 1868 and whose policies ushered in Japan's technological growth, interaction with Western powers, and development of State Shinto.

Meiji Restoration—Period beginning with Meiji's rule during which power was restored to the emperor from the shoguns. Shinto was separated from Buddhism and given prominence as the established state religion.

miko—Shrine maiden; a young woman who performs ritual dances and other shrine duties.

mikoshi—A palanquin (chest) on long poles in which the *kami* are symbolically carried around a town during a festival.

miyamairi—Presentation of a new-born child to the family's local shrine.

New Religions—Religious movements, some based on Shinto and others on Buddhism, that were classified as Sect Shinto during the Meiji period.

***Nihongi* (also *Nihon Shoki*)**—"Chronicles of Ancient Japan," completed in the eighth century, recording the traditions of Shinto and the *kami* from prehistoric times.

***norito* (also *norii*)**—Ancient prayers used by priests in Shinto ceremonies.

Oharai—The *norito,* or song or prayer, of the Great Purification ritual.

polytheistic—Having many deities, characteristic of Shinto.

Ryobu Shinto—So-called double-aspect Shinto, which associated Shinto deities with Buddhist gods.

sakaki—Sacred tree of Shinto. It is widely planted on shrine grounds and its branches are sometimes used in Shinto purification rites.

samurai—Japanese warrior class in feudal times.

sando—The approach to a shrine.

Sect Shinto—New Religions, or religious sects classified by the Meiji government.

Shichigosan—The annual seven-five-three festival, a day of prayer for the welfare of children, when boys of five and girls of three and seven visit their shrine.

shintai—A sacred symbol of *kami,* such as the mirror enshrined at Ise, which is the *shintai* of Amaterasu.

Shinto—Japanese religion that developed from prehistoric folk religions, featuring the worship of *kami.*

shogun—Military dictator. Shoguns ruled Japan from the end of the 12th century to 1867.

shrine—Shinto sacred building where *kami* are enshrined and prayers are offered.

Shrine Shinto (Jinja Honcho)—A form of Shinto in which priests perform rites as if *kami* are present.

State Shinto—A nonreligious form of Shinto, made obligatory during the Meiji Restoration and banned after World War II.

Tenrikyo—A religion founded by Miki Nakayama in 1838, based on Shinto. It was the first of the New Religions to gain many followers and is still attracting adherents.

Tokugawa Period—A period of strict rule by Tokugawa shoguns, from 1603 to 1864.

torii—Sacred gateway to a Shinto shrine.

tutelary *kami*—Guardian kami of local shrines; the *kami* that protect people living in a given area.

uji—Clan

Yamato—Geographical area south of Nara in central Japan; clan from which the imperial line emerged.

Yasukuni—Tokyo shrine that enshrines war dead as *kami*.

zen—Form of Buddhism widely practiced in Japan.

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The late **Paula R. Hartz** was a teacher and a textbook editor, and specialized in writing nonfiction and educational materials for elementary and secondary school students. She is the author of *Baha'i Faith, Daoism, Native American Religions, Taoism,* and *Zoroastrianism,* all from Chelsea House's World Religions series.

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